Jonathan Alter *on*
MIDDLE EUROPE

The Washington Monthly

MAY 1990/$3.00

BORIS YELTSIN *on*
Kremlin
Creature Comforts

BEYOND MONEY:
REPLACING
THE GOLD STANDARD
WITH
THE GOLDEN RULE

WHAT THE OTHER REVIEWERS MISSED:

- Nicholas Lemann *on* H.L. Mencken
- J. Anthony Lukas *on* Janet Malcolm

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The Washington Monthly

Volume Twenty-Two, Number Four May 1990

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LETTERS

Street talk

"Who are the Homeless?" by Scott Shuger in your March issue was an excellent piece of writing and one of the few candid treatments of the subject I have seen.

HANK COX
Takoma Park, Maryland

Scott Shuger interviews a relatively small number of panhandlers and concludes that their condition is the result of the unrealistic attitudes instilled in them by popular culture. Perhaps he has misidentified cause and effect.

Do big, airy dreams create homelessness—or does homelessness create big, airy dreams? Most of us, confronted with that degree of misfortune, might very well engage in such fantasies as a way of preserving our dignity and sense of hope.

Frankly, I don't put much stock in theories that attribute social problems to some vague national mentality. Given that homelessness has increased enormously under the Reagan and Bush administrations, I find it more likely that the problem is essentially economic and political, rather than cultural.

Several years ago, your colleague Michael Kinsley wrote a *New York Times* editorial about the frustrations of looking for an apartment in Manhattan for under $1,000 a month. Imagine trying to find a place to live in New York today—for, say, $400 a month. Think of the difficulty in getting a job doing manual labor when a great many jobs are moving into the service sector of the economy. And what about paying outrageously high premiums for limited medical care—or winding up sick, uninsured, and consequently destitute? These seem to be far more plausible reasons for homelessness than, as Mr. Shuger suggests, "Dynasty."

Here in New York, some of the homeless have two and three part-time jobs. Mr. Shuger probably didn't interview people like them, either because he assumes that all the employed have homes or because the working homeless are usually too ashamed of their status to admit to it.

The Washington Monthly exposes waste and mismanagement better than anyone else, but your examinations of large social issues tend to be woefully superficial. In the future, please try to go beyond fluffy perceptions, and offer some solid insights.

KAREN TREANOR
Forest Hills, New York

Your article on the homeless confirms my faith in *The Washington Monthly*'s skill at cutting through the rhetoric and pulling out the nuggets of truth in our social and political issues.

Two years ago, I was asked to apply my job training expertise to the question of helping the homeless get jobs—the implication being that if the homeless had jobs, the problem would be solved.

Working with local shelters and social agencies, it became apparent that jobs were not the answer for all homeless people. In fact, for many homeless, significant support would be necessary to obtain and retain most jobs, especially jobs above the minimum wage.

We fulfilled our mission and prepared a homeless employment plan. Our estimate is that approximately half the homeless can be helped by a well-designed job program. However, a good homeless employment program, in our opinion, must include intensive case management, which is often expensive.

Fortunately, the U.S. Department of Labor has selected our plan as one of this year's Homeless Employment Demonstration Projects, so now we have a chance to conduct a full-scale demonstration of the plan to see how it works. The "X-factor" is a useful perspective, which I will share with my colleagues. Thanks for providing an insightful look at a difficult problem.

STANLEY SCHROEDER
San Diego, California

Your experiences with the homeless in D.C.'s streets and shelters accord closely with what I've found elsewhere around the country. I really don't know the full explanation for what you label the "X-factor"—I do suspect, though, that the exaggerated sense of entitlement that you came across would have faded had you remained in contact longer with the X-factor individuals. My own experience is that some of the grandiosity of the homeless reflects relatively subtle mental illness or substance abuse problems that are not always evident on a first encounter.

For those who suffer from the X-factor but are not disturbed or addicted, part of their exaggerated sense of entitlement (I think) stems simply from loneliness. I've found that the homeless are almost wholly cut off from any abiding human companionship ("disaffiliated," to use the lingo of sociology). My guess is that when folks become that isolated, the only way they can justify their state is by puffing up their sense of privilege and expectation. I might be wrong, but that seems to me to be a pretty sad piece of the X-factor puzzle.

Your story reflected some of what I have written on the homeless, and the egotist in me would like to have seen some mention of those pieces—particularly since I took a fair amount of grief for what I wrote at the time, and since Michael Willrich's article in the same *Monthly* issue ["Renting the Fourth Estate"] conveyed the impression that my articles on the homeless had a "conservative bent."

I was very pleased that Willrich did not report that I had been bought off by the Heritage Foundation, and that he praised me for being forthright about honoraria. I don't feel, though, that I hold conservative views on the homeless. The pre-Heritage speech article that Willrich suggests cleared me of a conflict of interest (because it had the

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"same [conservative] bent" as my post-Heritage "conservative" story) appeared in that right-wing rag, *The New Republic*. Moreover, the allegedly "conservative" post-Heritage story prompted a letter from Stuart Butler of the Heritage Foundation, who complained that I had understated the extent of mental illness among the homeless.

As to my published comments at Heritage (which I sent Willrich a copy of), I said that "Ronald Reagan's record on the homeless is one of the biggest blots on his legacy . . . . It is time to put several billion dollars of federal money into more innovative homeless-aid programs"; and that "most of what the president and Ed Meese did for the homeless was to raise doubts about whether they really wanted help and whether they really were hungry."

It is true that I don't accept many of the claims about the homeless put forth by homeless advocates. But that doesn't make me a "conservative." (If it does, I think that qualifies the *Monthly* for the C-word too.)

DAVID WHITMAN
Washington, D.C.

Honoraria discharges

Michael Willrich spoke to me at least twice in connection with his piece on journalists and honoraria. While I did say that the honorarium question was much ado about nothing, I nevertheless voiced no opposition to disclosure. In fact, I have written a column advocating precisely that—although just how this disclosure will be made and to whom is something I leave to others to figure out.

When Eleanor Randolph asked me to reveal the speeches I made and how much I was paid for them, I told her. When Willrich asked me, I told him, too. Nevertheless, when I read *The Washington Monthly*, I was dismayed to see that I was characterized as being opposed to disclosure. I am not, and, if you like, I will annually file a statement of speaking fees with *The Washington Monthly*. It will do wonders for your circulation.

RICHARD COHEN
Washington, D. C.

I believe a journalist who lives by the sword should be prepared to die by the sword. I'm not so thin-skinned that I can't take a few jabs. They come with the territory. But I found the *Monthly*'s piece on journalists accepting honoraria to be a bit much. Your reporter concedes he couldn't find any real conflict of interest. Instead, he zings me as a so-called celebrity journalist for neglecting my reporting duties because of "how thin she's spreading herself." Well, I don't know how Michael Willrich prioritizes his time, but I do know he never found the time to call me for his piece. As a working journalist for more than 20 years, I've never been too busy to call the subjects (or targets) of a piece, even if it's only for a no comment.

If he had called, he would have learned that the John Glenn quote he lifted from *Newsweek*'s "Perspectives" page appeared there only because I reported it after attending Glenn's swearing-in of the new National Press Club president (a Saturday evening event that was largely uncovered). The activities he lists as too time-consuming include four 8 a.m. breakfast panel discussions with high-school students and television appearances that were taped before 9 a.m., during lunch, or after 7 p.m. With the exception of "The McLaughlin Group," which pays better, the total honoraria came to $2,000.

I have no quarrel with disclosure. I'm on your side. But since *The Washington Monthly* is so earnest about the subject, why did you omit the names of the staffers who made paid speeches to the organizations you listed? If you favor disclosure, it's no fair hiding under the corporate umbrella.

ELEANOR CLIFT
Washington, D.C.

The editors reply:

Son of Disclosure—The Adventure Continues: We regret that, through an editorial error, we omitted Richard Cohen's endorsement of disclosure. All speeches disclosed by the *Monthly* were made by Charles Peters. For those keeping score at home, add a speech to the German Marshall Fund ($125) and an appearance on WUSA's "Capital Edition" ($300) to your totals.

Soak the dead

This is a letter agreeing with you ["Tilting at Windmills," March]. Actually, I agree with you about 95 percent of the time.

SOAK THE RICH was a New Deal battle cry. It was the intention to make extinct over time all large personal fortunes. The means were taxes: personal tax rates ran up to 92 percent, inheritance and gift taxes ran up to 50 percent. An army of lawyers and tax accountants went to work to find ways to avoid or repeal these taxes, and they were effective for only about two years.

An astute friend once pointed out to me that middle-class morality is found only among middle-class people. "The poor can't afford it, and the rich can afford to disregard it."

ARTHUR D. PENSER
Huntsville, Alabama

You say you have received no letters after urging a much higher estate tax on large inheritances. If you assume that no one agrees with you, you will be off by at least one. I agree with you. Why did I not write immediately after the February issue? It looked to me as though you would have to be elected president before there would be someone in that office who would make the case for higher inheritance taxes and sign a bill after pressing the issue on Congress. Senators and representatives will not raise them, for many owe their positions to the advantages that come with inheritance.

Events of the moment offer arguments for higher inheritance taxes. If inheritance taxes had been high enough to deprive Donald Trump of a chance to get a good toehold in Manhattan property, he might have developed a set of values of a different social order.

Higher inheritance taxes could also spare us from paying the price exacted by the declining number of platforms for expression of something other than conservative economic assumptions. The eldest son of Malcolm Forbes is quoted as saying that the magazine he inherits will contin-

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ue to express the conservative economic beliefs of his father. The son has reason to be grateful to his father and the tax system that will enable him to continue to entertain advertisers on the Forbes yacht. Yet, as long as he holds the top position at *Forbes* magazine, he will never experience the exhilaration of success achieved in starting new enterprises from nothing.

Your proposal for a return to an inheritance tax that rises in steps from 38 percent for incomes above $100,000 to 50 percent for incomes above $300,000 would not in itself put *Forbes* under new management, but it would increase the challenges facing the four Forbes sons and thus give them a better chance to earn your admiration and mine.

DENZIL WALTERS
Seattle, Washington

Here's a letter agreeing with you. I'm not really surprised you've had no mail on this—it seems so hopeless a cause with the kind of political leadership and political-party "competition" we have. But wouldn't it be nice if just one White House reporter, just once, would ask just one question such as, "Mr. President, do you favor or oppose a higher estate tax on large inheritances, which as you know, are unearned?"

MORTON MINTZ
Chevy Chase, Maryland

President Bush seems to assume that we citizens cannot figure out that reducing the capital gains tax for the wealthy and increasing the social security tax on the working people is not the way to have a "kinder, gentler nation." This tax policy is highly beneficial to the rich, penalizes the poor, and puts increased tax burdens on the working and middle classes. The social security tax starts with the first dollar earned, with no exemption until one earns more than $51,300 a year.

This is socialism for the rich! It is insensitive to the plight of the poor, the marginal wage earner, and the elderly, and shifts the tax burden to those least able to pay.

This trickle-down effect is described by John Kenneth Galbraith as "the horse and sparrow metaphor, holding that if the horse is fed enough oats, some will pass through to the road for the sparrows."

WILLIAM H. DARBY
Corpus Christi, Texas

Plane speaking

There is no doubt in my mind that everything Larry Eichel writes in his article ["Flying the Unfriendly Skies," February] is quite true. No doubt there are actions that the industry, government, and individuals could take that would lead to improvements. However, I think we are being concerned about the wrong thing.

It is our total commitment to air and automotive transportation that is the real problem. Our neglect of rail is foolish.

There is no doubt that the speed of air for long hauls and the convenience of automobiles for short- and medium-length trips of certain types is advantageous. For the medium-length trips, as for example from Cincinnati to

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Cleveland, I have no satisfactory choice. Trips to and from the airports take more time than the actual flight. Auto or bus is too slow, and bus is too uncomfortable.

We should be taking action along the lines of Europe. At their poorest, their systems were reasonably good. Today every European country is building systems that will average better than 150 mph. The trains are clean, comfortable, and frequently energy efficient and environmentally benign.

Also, don't tell me that Americans will not ride trains. If the price and service are right, we will. Even Amtrak, with all its defects, is gaining ridership every year.

And don't tell me that trains are uneconomical. British Rail's Intercity service is now making a profit and, as time goes on, so will others.

S. TED ISAACS
Cincinnati, Ohio

As boring as it grows to repeatedly point out the obvious to diehard defenders of regulation, the higher fares, reduced safety margins, and inferior service of today's airline market are attributable not to airline deregulation but to continued government intervention in two other crucial (and consistently ignored) areas of air travel: airports and air-traffic control. Has it not occurred to Larry Eichel that the airlines' hub-and-spoke dominance is due to the woeful undersupply of airports and that that undersupply is due to the governmental or quasi-governmental nature of airports themselves?

As tax-supported monopolies requiring public input for their construction, airports rely on politics, not economics, for their existence, i.e., wangling higher taxes and/or bond approval out of reluctant taxpayers, inviting endless struggles from local pressure groups over airport construction and maintenance, cutting cozy lease and landing-fare deals between local politicos and politically favored airlines, plus the time-consuming red tape, inefficiency, and corruption we can expect from any government activity. Fewer airports means fewer choices for fliers and easier dominance by the majors; hence the overuse of aging airplanes for more traffic hogged by fewer airlines, greater pilot fatigue and error, less pilot training, etc. A corresponding undersupply of government air-traffic controllers (unlikely to improve, given the federal deficit and government misuse of the airline fund to cover it) is to thank for the greater number of near misses (or near hits, depending on how you read "near") and long takeoff and landing delays.

The solution, therefore, is not a return to government regulation, whose abuses and inadequacies prompted deregulation to begin with (and, given past experience, would only serve to cement the airline oligarchy Eichel deplores), but to further degovernmentalize airports and air-traffic control, turning them over completely to private enterprise and allowing profit incentives, not politics, to allow them to expand and multiply to meet airline traffic demand, compete with major dominance at older airports, and encourage innovations like peak-priced landing fees that vary with use and time of day to even out traffic patterns. An article making these points rather than the same old back-to-big-government chant would have made a far more significant contribution to discussion of air-travel problems.

WILLIAM WOMACK
Washington, D.C.

David Nather fully substantiates how airlines are managing to tie up all gates at various hub airports with long-term below-market leases, even if they're not using them ["Flying the Unfriendly Skies II," March]. He cites as an example the case of Southwest Airlines in Detroit, which "subleases gates from Northwest at the rate of $150 per flight—19 times what Northwest pays for its gate space."

Nather offers a one-sentence solution to this gate problem: "Gate leases should be short-term, no more than six months to a year, and they should be renewed by the airport authority—or canceled—based solely on the airline's performance at that airport."

Experience tells us the airport is not likely to be tough enough, and anyway, if the leases are at full market value, the authorities won't have to make such tough decisions. After all, wouldn't it be too costly for an airline to underuse its gates if it had to pay full rental value for them? And in any case, here's a significant revenue raiser for airports or for governments—a revenue raiser, the costs of which could not be passed on to airline passengers in the form of higher prices.

This is exactly like the taxation of land values—another kind of space. Better to tax land values and airport gates than to tax producers (workers and businesses).

Ditto for landing slots: let those be leased out also. Private ranchers shouldn't graze their cattle on public lands rent-free any more than airlines should land their airplanes rent-free at airport gates or slots.

STEVEN CORD
Columbia, Maryland

The editors reply:

Handing control of the airways to the free market, as Mr. Womack suggests, is not a promising alternative. How many planes can land on a given runway at Washington's National Airport at 5:00 on a given afternoon? One. Who's going to pick the airline? Well, the market—through a bidding war. Obviously, the airline with the deepest pockets, the one which can afford to jack up fares in a distant market it already controls in order to subsidize its hostile takeover of National, will dominate the airport. That's OK, reasons Mr. Womack, since "profit incentives" will cause airports to "expand and multiply." But hold on a second: who's going to condemn the land to build the airports? Who's going to condemn the neighbors for miles around to sleepless nights? And, most disturbing, when is the market going to decide that we've built too many airports and put too many planes in the sky at once? Intelligent government oversight and control, not "back-to-big-government" cant, is needed when a market contains such natural barriers to free enterprise and when public safety is at stake. Mr. Cord's long-term leases won't work either. Should two or three airlines snap up the long-term leases at an airport, they could easily pass on the added cost of holding underused gates or slots to their passengers (in fact, that's why airports don't charge full value now).

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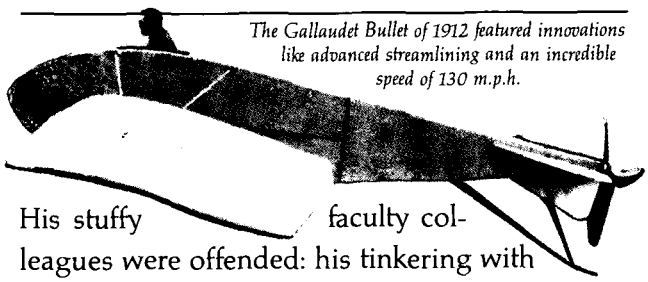
HE WASN'T A WRIGHT BROTHER. BUT HE HAD THE RIGHT IDEA.



The Gallaudet Bullet of 1912 featured innovations like advanced streamlining and an incredible speed of 130 m.p.h.

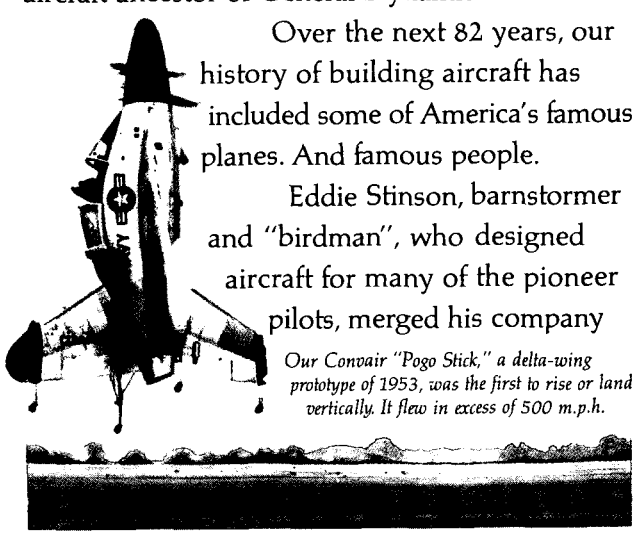
His stuffy faculty colleagues were offended: his tinkering with "foolish flying gimcracks" was "undignified."

But young professor Edson Gallaudet was willing to give up his dignity, and his job, for a new idea about warping the wings of flying machines.

In 1898, he tested a scale model which proved his idea right. And five years later, Wilbur and Orville Wright flew using that same principle.

Today Gallaudet's model is in the Smithsonian, one of two monuments to Gallaudet's inventiveness and persistence. The other is our company.

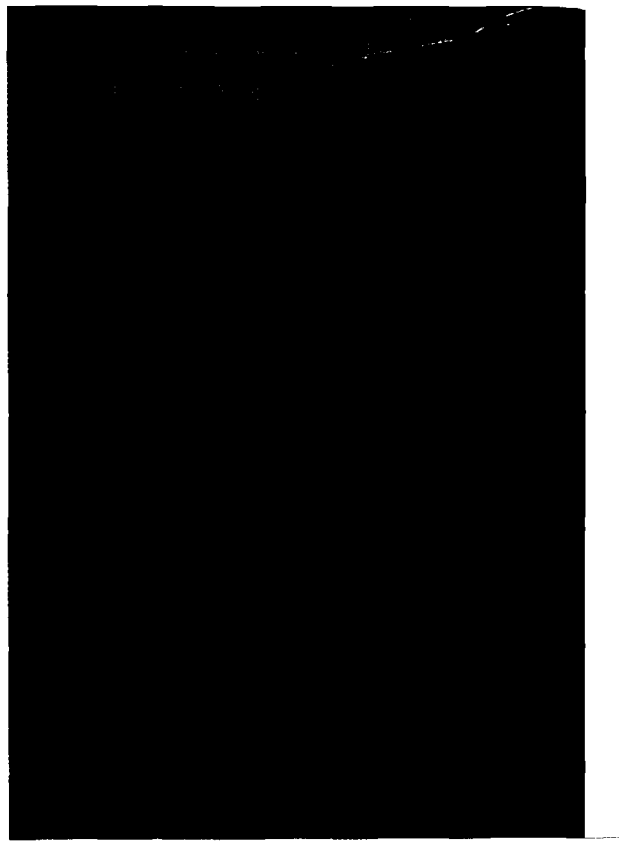
In 1908, Edson Gallaudet started what many credit as the first aircraft factory in America. Gallaudet Engineering Company became the earliest aircraft ancestor of General Dynamics.



Our Convair "Pogo Stick," a delta-wing prototype of 1953, was the first to rise or land vertically. It flew in excess of 500 m.p.h.

Over the next 82 years, our history of building aircraft has included some of America's famous planes. And famous people.

Eddie Stinson, barnstormer and "birdman", who designed aircraft for many of the pioneer pilots, merged his company with ours. As did Jerry Vultee, whose planes set many distance and speed records, including Jimmy Doolittle's 12-hour cross-country flight.



During WWII, the Consolidated B-24 Liberator went from plan to finished plane in a record nine months and became the most-produced American bomber. After the war, our B-36 Peacemaker became the backbone of America's Strategic Air Command.

Our innovative, delta-wing design made the F-102 the world's first supersonic interceptor. And the B-58 Hustler the world's first supersonic bomber.

Today our F-16 Fighting Falcon is rated

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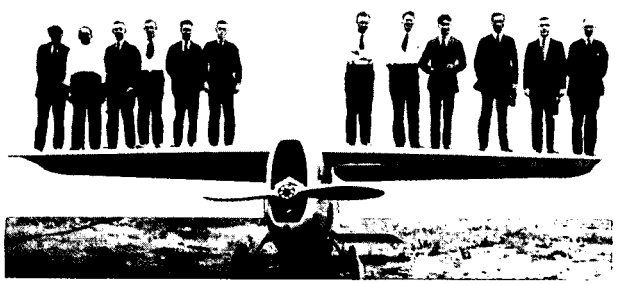
the finest fighter in the world. It well represents our long tradition of craftsmanship and creativity.

Once again, that tradition is about to be tested. In a technology competition against groups from West Germany and Japan, General Dynamics is teaming with four top American companies to develop the National Aerospace Plane.



The RB Racer, made by Dayton-Wright Airplane Company, was the first aircraft to have fully retractable landing gear. Dayton-Wright became an early part of General Dynamics.

To fly from runway to orbit, at speeds up to 17,000 m.p.h., we must invent new science. We must also invent new ways for American competitors to work together. But we are confident.

Since the days of Gallaudet, our company has been inventing not only better airplanes, but better ways to make them.

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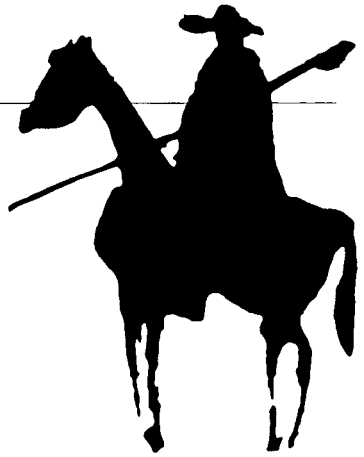
TILTING AT WINDMILLS



The latest addition to the ever-escalating bill for the B-2 is the $1.6 billion it will cost to build 120 air-conditioned hangars to house the bombers. Why do the hangars have to be air-conditioned? Because there will be "extreme cockpit heat buildup" during the summer months that will lead to "premature aging and failure of avionic components." Why the heat buildup? Because the plane's windows won't open. Why won't the windows open? Listen, Buster, one more question like that and we'll throw you out of the Pentagon. . . .

If you have shared my bewilderment at how the honor system at West Point and Annapolis could produce officers who habitually lie about their budgetary needs in the course of dealing with the other services, the OMB, and the Congress, you may be interested in one clue I have found to the mystery.

Professor Ralph P. Santoro, who had taught at the Naval Academy for 25 years and rose to the chairmanship of the electrical engineering department, was recently dismissed for refusing to raise the grades of his students. He was, in other words, fired for refusing to lie about what he thought were proper marks. So what's the real message about honor? . . .

Speaking of lying, did you happen to see the excerpts *Time* printed from Richard Nixon's forthcoming memoirs? In trying to make a point about how much tougher press coverage is today than it was a few decades ago, Nixon says:

"Although I had always had a lively interest in public affairs, I was not aware until after his death that Franklin D. Roosevelt was crippled by polio." Nixon is lying. Although the press did not publish photographs of FDR in a wheelchair, practically everyone in America knew his legs had been paralyzed by polio, that he needed a specially equipped car to drive and that, because of his condition, swimming was the only form of exercise available to him. He was never shown standing alone, without an arm or a rostrum to hold onto. . . .

Last month I wrote about how one possible future Democratic candidate for president, Bill Bradley, had been dead wrong on a crucial issue. This month it's the Republicans' turn. The possible candidate is the ambitious Secretary of State James Baker.

The occasion of *his* crucial error was a June 5, 1985 letter that Baker, who was then secretary of the treasury, received from William M. Isaac, who was then chairman of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation. It read: "When we got together a few months ago in your office, I told you that one of my principal concerns about the financial system was the condition of the thrift industry. About that time, I requested our staff to prepare an analysis of the industry. . . . [It] concludes that the problem[s] of the thrift industry [are] such that they will soon overwhelm the ability of the Federal Savings and Loan Corp. to deal with them."

Baker, having been thus warned, did nothing. The result was that the greatest financial scandal of recent times continued to roll merrily along for four more years. . . .

How idealistic are today's law students? At least a hint is

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suggested by the fact that of the 474 who graduated from Harvard Law last year, only six entered public interest law. . . .

I'm grateful to Gary Webb of the *San Jose Mercury News*'s Sacramento Bureau for an introduction to the unique lexicon of the California legislature. A "hard vote" means one that the lobbyist knows will go his way only if he has made a financial contribution to the legislator whose support he is soliciting. Legislators seek money for their vote by saying "Get involved," "Make a commitment," "I need some help on this," or perhaps in honor of their political science professor, "Participate in the process." Lobbyists with money to spend are called "Players" or "Big Boys." . . .

My old friend Jim Dent of the *Charleston Gazette* recently recalled the 1940s when mail was delivered twice a day and a stamp cost three cents. Now that we're scheduled to pay 10 times that amount, Dent notes he can't even count on once-a-day delivery, especially after Monday holidays, when his carrier doesn't come around at all on Tuesday.

This pattern of declining service and rising prices did not keep the Postal Service from awarding 75 division general managers bonuses averaging $5,564 in 1988 and $6,173 in 1989. This presumably was to reward them for contributing $597 million to the deficit in 1988 and for overspending their 1989 budget by $1.6 billion.

During 1989, while they were eliminating Sunday collections from thousands of mailboxes, postal officials spent more than $6 million on conferences for themselves at such places as Scottsdale, Arizona; Naples, Florida; Marina del Rey, California; and Maui, Hawaii. At Scottsdale, $13,000 was spent on three pre-dinner drinking parties and $99 a person for just one dinner.

In the midst of these glad tidings comes the news that the Postal Service has awarded Price Waterhouse a $23.4 million contract to measure how long it takes first-class mail to be delivered. Savor this one for a moment, roll it over gently in your mind, and consider if the Postal Service shouldn't, as the most basic part of operating its business, know the answer without having to ask Price Waterhouse? . . .

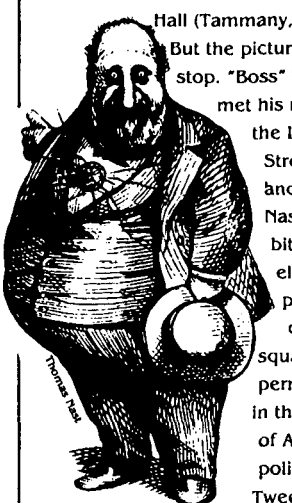
I'm delighted to report that Tony Kornheiser of *The Washington Post* has joined our campaign against expensive attire for kids. At least he's against outlandish prices for sneakers such as Nike's Air Jordans that cost $125 and Reebok's The Pump shoes that go for $175.

My objection to the Nikes and the designer jeans is that they are poisonous to the democratic spirit that ruled the public schools of my youth. Then practically everyone could afford the clothing that was considered acceptable. Since what was "in" was within everyone's reach, being rich couldn't make you a significantly more impressive dresser.

Kornheiser has another objection: Even though the shoes cost more than a poor family can afford, "it takes no time at all to earn enough for sneakers by selling drugs." He also wonders why virtually every major basketball coach in the country and many of the most outstanding athletes have lucrative contracts to promote shoes that a large number of kids can't buy without committing crimes. . . .

"STOP THEM DAMN PICTURES"

That's what "Boss" Tweed demanded when he saw the handwriting on the Hall (Tammany, that is). But the pictures didn't stop. "Boss" Tweed met his maker in the Ludlow Street Jail and Thomas Nast put bitingly eloquent political cartoons squarely and permanently in the middle of American political life. Tweed aside, we think Emerson had it right when he said, *"Caricatures are often the truest history of the times."*



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Last year, David R. Peterson killed a nine-year-old girl by stabbing her 34 times. He was found not guilty by reason of insanity. He had previously committed two other stabbing attacks but, on each occasion, had also been found not guilty because of insanity. As a result he was in a mental hospital from which, after the second attack, he escaped merely by strolling off the grounds. He went directly to a sporting goods shop where he purchased a hunting knife. He then walked approximately a hundred yards from the store, seized Jessica Short, the nine-year-old, and proceeded to knife her to death.

When are we going to realize that violent criminals, whether sane or insane, must be put in maximum security prisons and held until it is clear they are no longer a threat to innocent people? . . .

I'm indebted to Jack Anderson and Dale Van Atta for a recent column that reminded me of one of the irritating snobberies in the federal government. American diplomats serving abroad receive an education allowance of $14,900 per child. This permits their children to be educated at the best boarding schools. Military dependents on the other hand are educated at Department of Defense schools at a cost per pupil of $5,000. Are the foreign service's children really worth more than the military's? . . .

We all know stories about doctors being forced out of medicine because of the high cost of malpractice insurance. But then we learn from a recent Harvard study that there is much more malpractice than doctors are ever sued for. So when we hear of proposals for a no-fault approach to malpractice compensation that would lower the cost of insurance by eliminating lawsuits with their inflated claims for "pain and suffering," we say that sounds good, but we wonder how doctors will have any incentive to end malpractice if their guilt is not exposed through the same lawsuits that no-fault would eliminate.

Certainly it doesn't seem likely that the medical licensing boards will do much to control the sins of their peers. A recent California case is typical of the way that these doctor-controlled boards operate. The California board did not revoke the license of Dr. Milos Klvana until more than a year after he was jailed for extreme malpractice that ultimately led to his conviction for second-degree murder in the deaths of eight infants between 1982 and 1986. While the murders were going on the board ignored warnings of his incompetence from two hospitals and one of its own experts.

But I have a solution to this, which involves a kind word for my friends at the bar about whom I usually agree with Marlin Fitzwater: They deserve all the criticism they can get. But the average trial lawyer does become an expert on the sins of doctors. In malpractice cases, he has to learn enough about medicine to understand why things go wrong in the operating room and elsewhere in the practice of medicine. If medical licensing boards were dominated by laymen with enough trial lawyers among them to cross-examine the doctors accused of malpractice, there would be none of the self-protective guild mentality that now lets the guilty escape. Licenses could be revoked and the public protected without resort to costly court cases that inflate the insurance burden of good doctors. . . .

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Related to this point is another kind word I want to say about lawyers. It arises from the congressional hearings on the nomination of an attorney, Timothy Ryan, to oversee the rescue of the Savings and Loans. The charge against Ryan was that he is not an expert. But a lawyer's greatest strength is that he isn't buffaloed by the experts. In my transition from the law to journalism, my greatest frustration with my new colleagues was that they were scared to cross-examine the experts. They would quote experts on each side of a question but they were afraid to try to figure out who was right, so they couldn't guide their readers to the truth.

I don't know if Ryan is a good lawyer or not, but, if he is, he will know how to find out what he needs to know from the experts without being conned by them . . . .

If you're still wondering why journalists seem to be eager to be on television and why those television panel show members tend to lean to the right, Joe Cosby, who books journalist speakers for lucrative speaking engagements before business conventions, recently told Eric Alterman, a Washington writer, that the only requirements were that the journalist "be on television" and "be conservative.". . .

Having seen Philip Morris's National Archives ad some 40 or 50 times, the one where the narrator gravely intones, "The freedom to say and think what we believe, to express our individuality and diversity, that's our birthright," I was astonished to learn that a Philip Morris subsidiary, the Miller Brewing Company, has sued a group of Texas doctors who ridiculed a Miller Lite promotion with t-shirts that said "Killer Lite Beer, We're Pushing a Drug." Philip Morris, if you're for free speech in peddling cigarette and alcohol, the least you can do is support free speech for those who disagree with you . . . .

If they're lagging a bit in their defense of First Amendment rights, the tobacco companies certainly are busy trying to buy good will by associating themselves with good causes, which in turn creates a moral dilemma on the part of the good cause. City commissioners in Lakeland, Florida, recently rejected a chewing tobacco company's offer to finance a softball tournament. On the other hand, the District of Columbia school board, after a struggle, seems ready to accept grants from R.J. Reynolds and Philip Morris.

And the American Ballet Theatre has accepted, without apparent struggle, Philip Morris's sponsorship of its annual tour and anniversary celebration.

Of course, more than 90 percent of American newspapers and magazines accept tobacco advertising without protest by their publishers—or their reporters.

The reasoning that justifies this sort of thing is that it's permissible to take money from Satan himself if the money helps a good cause. I agree with that reasoning, but only as long as the good cause's association with Satan does not enable him to look like a good guy. The moment to get suspicious is when he starts talking about the press release. . . .

—*Charles Peters*

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How Political Ads Subtract

It's not the negative ads that are perverting democracy. It's the deceptive ones.

by Daniel Slocum Hinerfeld

"Harbor"

A montage of filth and decay in and around what is supposed to be Boston Harbor. An announcer speaks:

"As a candidate, Michael Dukakis called Boston Harbor an open sewer. As governor he had the opportunity to do something about it but chose not to. The Environmental Protection Agency called his lack of action the most expensive public policy mistake in the history of New England. Now Boston Harbor, the dirtiest harbor in America, will cost residents $6 billion to clean. And Michael Dukakis promises to do for America what he's done for Massachusetts."

Creator: Frankenberry, Laughlin & Constable, Inc. in association with Ailes Communications, Inc.

Client: Republican National Committee For Bush-Quayle '88

Most of us remember (and are a little sick of hearing about) the images that somehow became the issues of the 1988 presidential campaign: sewage in the water, prisoners passing through turnstiles, consultants conspiring to wrap Bush in the flag. Less well known, however, are the techniques behind those ads—and how they're being applied in state and local campaigns around the country. Sure, there's been a lot of talk about the rise of "negative" political ads, which focus on an opponent's weaknesses rather than on the candidate's strengths. Campaign '88 did see a resurgence of negative advertising, but this phenomenon is the lesser evil: Negative ads, if truthful, can be just as useful to voters as truthful positive ones. The real danger comes from campaign ads that mislead. "Truth in advertising and accuracy in advertising sound like they're the same idea, but they're really not," says Jonathan Alter, a media and politics reporter for *Newsweek*. "The Boston Harbor ad would be a good example of that." The ad misleads both through what it says and what it shows.

According to Julian Kanter, curator of the Political Commercial Archive of the University of Oklahoma, in today's ads "the most important messages are those that are contained in the visual imagery." That imagery, he points out, "can be used to create impressions that are untrue." As Bush discovered, what consultants can accomplish in a production lab can be hard to duplicate on the campaign trail: He showed up at Boston Harbor to attack Dukakis's environmental record on a day when brilliant sunshine danced on the waves and Boston, shining in the distance, looked like the Emerald City. By contrast, the commercial relied on technically "accurate" close-up shots of fouled water to amplify dramatically the political message. Through such visual tricks, campaigns duck the libel laws they would face in print advertising: Try putting into words the Boston Harbor images—or those of the Johnson campaign's famous "daisy ad," in which a girl counting petals in a field

Daniel Slocum Hinerfeld is a writer in Los Angeles.

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is gradually replaced by a mushroom cloud, presumably due to some rash action of Barry Goldwater—and you get the idea.

The facts of the harbor ad, all technically accurate, were also carefully selected. As Alter points out, "They neglect to mention two points that are so important that they make the ad fundamentally untruthful." Those points? That Dukakis was the first Massachusetts governor to try to clean up the harbor, and that the Reagan-Bush administration blocked his efforts. The ad gave the sense that Bush had a stronger environmental record, which, as Alter says, "was simply a deeply misleading notion to convey to the voting public."

What Ailes you?

The cost to society of such deceptions is high. Political advertising is now the principal means of communicating with voters; most campaign money goes into TV advertising, rather than into political functions that directly involve voters—organizing efforts, volunteer activities, candidate appearances. Even when misleading advertising fails to accomplish its goal—convincing viewers to vote for someone they might otherwise reject—it degrades the political process and turns voters into cynics. "[I]f fewer than half the registered voters vote, why is that?" asks Robert Spero, author of a book about deceptive political advertising. "I think they don't believe anything anyone says." Dishonest campaigns take another toll as well. They force the opposition to answer illegitimate claims, which some campaigns simply can't afford to do.

Who's responsible for these misleading ads? Sidney Galanty, the successful producer of several Democratic political campaigns and of Jane Fonda exercise videos, sounds the same note as other consultants: "The people who are causing the most problems in this country are people like me," he says. "I know how to play on people's emotions. That's what I do for a living." But blaming the consultants—as much as they'd like us to—serves only to divert us from the real culprits. Though convenient, its absurd that Roger Ailes takes the heat for commercials approved by the candidates who employ him. But given the effectiveness of today's techniques, even a candidate who'd rather not use misleading ads feels that he can't risk taking the high road. The range of misleading spots—from Johnson's vaporized girl to Bush's stinking harbor to ads plugging or slamming local candidates across the country—demonstrates that deception is the inevitable result of a system that combines ambition with high technology and low accountability. To clean up the airwaves, and by extension the electoral process, we have to put an end to the Madison Avenue political commercial.

Compare political advertising to product advertising and you get an idea of how far we have to go. "There are federal rules and guidelines as to what you can do in product advertising, and you're subject to lawsuits," says one consultant. "So you know it's very dangerous to fool around with it. That's not true in politics." No one's fooling around more than Californians. Two recent referendums demonstrate the extent to which clever consultants can twist facts and images to represent their clients' interests by misrepresenting their records and goals

Through a new 25-cent-per-pack tax on cigarettes, California's Proposition 99, sponsored by the Coalition for a Healthy California, aimed to raise an estimated $600 million a year to fund hospital care for the poor, medical research of tobacco-related diseases, and an antismoking campaign aimed particularly at the young. To tobacco companies, the proposed tax hike was a nightmare. The proposition would cut consumption into cigarettes by making the product much more expensive and by making the cigarette industry pay for an advertising campaign against itself, a provision it felt added insult to injury.

In the spring of 1988, the Coalition for a Healthy California conducted a poll to test support for a cigarette tax. When the terms were explained, a large majority said it would be likely to support the proposal. Only when a series of unfavorable (and misleading) hypotheticals was added to the polling questions did support drop off substantially. Pollsters call these slanted queries "push" questions. They gauge the strength of support and indicate where a clever opponent is most likely to stick in the knife. Of voters polled, 58 percent said they would be less likely to vote for Prop 99 if special interests, particularly doctors and health-care providers, were to benefit from it. Forty-nine percent said they would be less likely to vote yes if large cigarette tax increases in other states had led to crimes including smuggling, given that the measure provided no money for law enforcement.

Sid Galanty, who made the Yes On 99 TV ads, took one look at the negative data and knew what to expect from the tobacco industry. "When you do polling, you say, 'Okay, I'm the opponent, what do I do? How do I attack the initiative and how do I win?' " With the issue of smoking, "there's death involved, it's very emotional." The tobacco industry needed an issue that was as emotional as cancer. According to Galanty, fear of crime and resentment toward doctors were the obvious levers.

Both sides' polling showed that voters would approve the initiative if they understood it. The tobacco

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companies were left with the following choice: They could run an honest campaign and lose, or. . . .

"Medical School"

A blond,"middle-class" woman appears on the screen and begins to speak with a hint of indignation: "If you went to medical school, you'll probably love Proposition 99, but if you didn't, make sure you don't get fooled. You see, 99 directs that hundreds of millions of our tax dollars will end up in the hands of doctors in the medical industry. And guess what? They sponsored Prop 99. Prop 99 is simply a smokescreen. It raises taxes and doctors get richer. Vote no on Proposition 99. Doctors are already rich enough.

Creator: Ailes Communications, Inc.

Client: Californians Against Unfair Tax Increases

Jeff Raimundo, a political consultant, was the communications director representing the tobacco industry in the No On 99 campaign. Asked if the campaign was trying to blur the distinction between private physicians and the public health care system, Raimundo explained that their original polling showed that "there was no single issue that we could win on." As a result, "we were trying to not so much blur the issues; we were just trying to use every single argument we had." These arguments weren't always "consistent," he admits, but "it's just that they were the only arguments we had." The tobacco companies had to distill an accurate, if deceptive, means of defining the proposition. That's why the blond woman in the medical school ad happens not to mention that the tax she's criticizing is a tobacco tax.

Besides asserting the unfairness of taxes, the tobacco industry also implied that a 25-cent cigarette tax hike could kill children.

"More Guns"

A rugged-looking man walks up to a van with its side doors open. "California Police Officer 19 years," says a subtitle. Crates inside the van overflow with handguns. The man looks into the camera. "How much money could a street gang make from smuggling cigarettes? With a van like this a gang could make enough money to buy 185 handguns. Every week. In the past year gangs have killed over 200 people, many of them innocent children."

The visual then changes. Now we see a jungle gym with children climbing on it. As the man talks, kids disappear and are replaced by white silhouettes.

"More guns might not cause more murders, but is it worth taking the chance that even one more innocent person may be killed? Proposition 99 would create major crime. California doesn't need any more crime. Vote no on Proposition 99."

Creator: Ailes Communications, Inc.

Client: Californians Against Unfair Tax Increases

The ad might seem hyperbolic in print, but according to polling data, it played well on television. "Apparently, the 40 percentage points worth of voters that were moved by it didn't see it as overkill," Raimundo says. In other words, the voters believed it, so it must be true. Can Raimundo point to any tobacco-related murders? "I can't say that that has happened," he admits. "I don't think anyone can say it hasn't happened either." The Surgeon General's office could give Raimundo a few examples: According to its figures, cigarettes killed more than 350,000 Americans in the past year.

Though political ads are usually based on some accurate details, the only "facts" that really matter to consultants are the opinions of the voters. As Raimundo defends the "More Guns" commercial, one realizes he is not addressing the ad's candor, but instead is explaining why people fell for it. The distinction between what is true and what is believable gradually blurs.

"Number one is the history of major tax increases in the East has in fact driven [smuggling]," Raimundo says. "The second was that statistically the ads were accurate. If you smuggled a truckload of cigarettes into California, the savings on the sales tax you would not have to pay would be a fixed amount of money. I mean you can calculate that on an adding machine. Doing that creates a certain amount of money, and money can buy guns. That's the second thing, and you have to take all three of them together, otherwise it doesn't make sense.

"The third point is that the people who ran the tobacco crime in the East were organized criminals. In California, organized crime shows up in the form of street gangs." And everyone had heard about the gang warfare in the streets of Los Angeles. "So there was again a credibility to that side of the ledger. People in Los Angeles believed, in fact, gangs were killing kids. So we put the three of them together, we believe logically and rationally, into a credible and provocative consequence of what would happen with the tobacco tax increase."

To live and lie in L.A.

Although many voters had a sense that the cigarette industry's claims were not true, debating the issues head-on would have been a disaster for the Yes On 99 campaign. In fact, a dry, forensic response was exactly what Roger Ailes wanted. "They had hoped to drag us into the arguments that they were putting forth," Galanty says. "But there's no way to answer 'Will there be smuggling?' It's like 'Have you stopped beating your wife?'" If you answer, he explains, you wind up magnifying the opponent's

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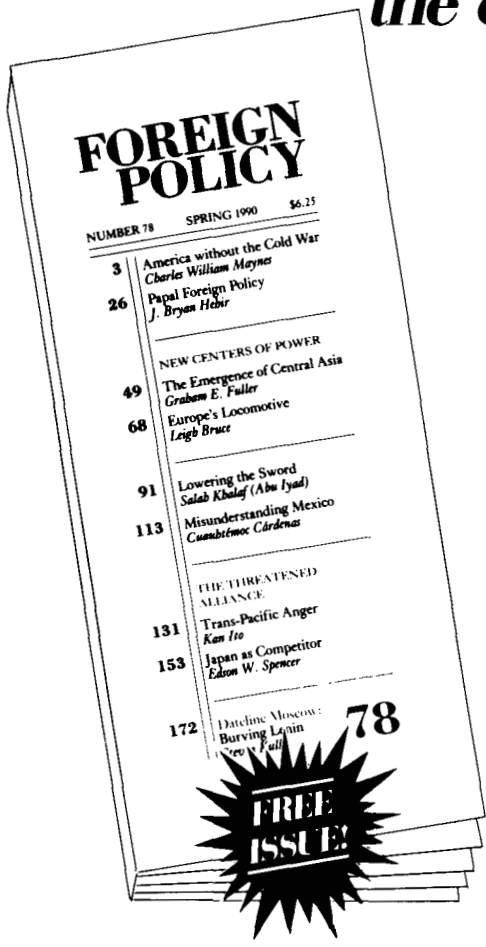

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points and lending them credibility.

"Undercover"

A dramatic chord sets the mood. A giant tractor-trailer sits askew in an industrial part of town. Lights flash. It is the aftermath of a major bust. The same rugged man from the More Guns ad swaggers toward the camera.

"I'm an undercover cop," he says. "I risk my life every day out here. But if Proposition 99 passes I can spend my time chasing cigarette smugglers. Prop 99 would make California cigarettes more expensive, so one load of illegal out-of-state cigarettes could avoid nearly $200,000 in taxes. And criminals make all the profit. 99 is the first initiative ever that would actually create major crime. I shouldn't be chasing these," he says, indicating the tractor-trailer. "I should be making our streets safer. Vote no on 99."

Creator: Ailes Communications, Inc.

Client: Californians Against Unfair Tax Increases

According to Raimundo, "Campaign advertising doesn't work if it's not credible. It will blow up in your face." Unfortunately for the No On 99 campaign, the Undercover commercial turned out not to be credible. It was a risky ad—after all, it averages one deception every 7.5 seconds. Moreover, it gave Yes On 99 what it needed: a symbol that would resonate with the voters.

The man in the ad is Jack Hoar, and he really is a member of the Los Angeles Police Department. He is also a part-time actor. Before the No On 99 campaign, the high point of Hoar's dramatic career had been his portrayal of a vicious cop-killer in the movie *To Live and Die in L.A.*. Cast as Willem Dafoe's henchman, Hoar blows away two Secret Service agents investigating his boss's counterfeiting operation. After the first killing, Hoar, a chaw wedged in his mouth, spits a brown stream of tobacco juice at the slain officer.

It was the cigarette industry's bad luck that a member of the Yes On 99 campaign vaguely remembered Hoar's earlier performance. After renting the videotape and confirming their suspicion, Yes On 99 staffers checked Hoar's police credentials. At the time, Hoar was working a desk job.

Armed with these facts, the Coalition for a Healthy California began a "free-media" blitz. In well-orchestrated press conferences throughout California, the Yes On 99 campaign announced that the man in the controversial ads was not an undercover cop, but an actor. Videotapes juxtaposing the No On 99 ads with Hoar's performance in *To Live and Die in L.A.* were distributed to local TV stations, some of which ran the footage unedited.

Despite its support from newspaper editorialists and major law enforcement officials, the Yes On 99 campaign attributes its success largely to Jack Hoar. "[S]upport was diminishing until that allegation came out that he was not what he said he was," says Maureen Marr, Yes On 99s deputy director. "There was nothing they could do after that that ever had an effect on the voters." But the basis of this well-deserved backlash was not completely correct. Jack Hoar is a cop and maintains that he has done undercover work for the LAPD.

"What the other side did was basically lie," Raimundo says. "Because [Hoar] had a desk assignment at the time they bothered to make the phone call, they said that therefore he wasn't an undercover cop. And because he happened to play a bit part, he was therefore an actor, which is absurd." On the other hand, Prop 99 wasn't sponsored by greedy doctors trying to enrich themselves, and large-scale cigarette smuggling leading to the murder of school children is a public relations fantasy.

That's the problem with political ads on television. Deceptive tactics tend to propagate; one side lowers the standards of debate, and the opposition feels entitled or compelled to do the same; the medium itself encourages the low blow.

The name game

Will Rogers State Beach is one of the most popular beaches in Southern California. The Pacific Coast Highway and cliffs of soft, crumbling earth separate it from the Pacific Palisades, an upscale Los Angeles neighborhood. A patch of land at the base of those cliffs, owned by Occidental Petroleum Corporation, became the object of intense controversy 20 years ago when the company announced plans to drill for oil there.

The battle between Occidental and No Oil, Inc., a Palisades neighborhood association formed to oppose the oil company, culminated in 1988. After losing in court and in a bid before the Los Angeles City Council, No Oil decided to take its case directly to the people. It formed a campaign committee with a group called Citizens for a Livable Los Angeles and put a measure on the 1988 Los Angeles ballot, Proposition O, which would stop Occidental from drilling on its coastal property. Occidental opposed Prop O by running an alternative initiative, Proposition P, which seemed to have a positive ecological point of its own.

The O vs. P dispute was a tough call. Occidental acquired the ocean-view property—in a land swap with the City of Los Angeles—with the express intent of drilling there, and the company tried hard to appease local opponents. Furthermore, the project would produce millions of dollars in tax revenue for

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Los Angeles. The argument of No Oil came down to this: No matter what assurances Occidental gave, it could not guarantee the safety of Will Rogers State Beach. Both arguments had merit. Unfortunately, the merits were to have little to do with the campaign.

Occidental's first move was to invent a name for its campaign committee. If there is anything funny about the California initiative phenomenon, it is the inevitable attempt by every campaign to create a benevolent-sounding committee name. Occidental took this ploy one step further, calling its campaign organization the "Los Angeles Public and Coastal Protection Committee." William Robertson, secretary and treasurer of the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO, was a member of the committee. He is not defensive about Occidental's choosing a name that made it appear to oppose its actual goals. "I think practically all measures mislead the voters," Robertson says. "That's the nature of the game."

The candidate who misrepresents himself can count on the media to obscure what really happened through its fondness for quoting offsetting opinions no matter what the merits of the case.

Argument by equivocation—trading on the ambiguity of a concept—is one of the oldest tricks in the confidence game. Occidental put it to good use. The ambiguous concept here was "coastal oil drilling," which can mean either drilling on land near water or drilling in water near land. Occidental wrote its initiative to oppose the latter and to allow the former. A subsidiary provision added to Prop P called on the civic leaders of Los Angeles to use their "best efforts" to oppose oil drilling in Santa Monica Bay.

True, the voters of Los Angeles have no jurisdiction over Santa Monica Bay (it is controlled by the state and federal governments), but that didn't matter. Occidental would later argue in court that P's language against coastal drilling was a valid "policy statement" even if it lacked the power to compel. This argument prevailed in court.

But Occidental wasn't finished. "Then they turned around," says Roger Diamond, the lawyer who headed No Oil, Inc., "and pointed out that our measure, O, said nothing about drilling in the bay." Occidental produced television commercials suggesting that the real purpose of Prop O was to allow drilling. The ads said that O was a loophole so big you could drive a truck through it, a point that was illustrated with a logo. The logo featured an oil truck driving through the letter "O."

Occidental's transformation into an environmental group was almost complete. The only thing left was to make sure the name Occidental Petroleum was not included in the Prop P ads. Voters might be gullible, but not gullible enough to believe an oil company was against drilling for oil.

So it was that the Los Angeles Public and Coastal Protection Committee began its campaign push with television, radio, newspaper, direct-mail, and yard-sign advertising, none of which mentioned Occidental Petroleum. California law requires a committee sponsor to identify itself only if it contributes "all or nearly all" of a committee's funds. Although Occidental was the sole contributor to the committee for several months, as the election neared a small percentage of revenue came in from other sources.

In court, Occidental argued that the company and its officers and directors had contributed only 92 percent of the committee's revenue—i.e., less than "all." Hence, they contended the "nearly all" provision governed. But, said Occidental, this provision was too vague to be applied constitutionally. What exactly did "nearly all" mean? Ninety-nine percent? Ninety-eight percent?

"The fact is, Your Honor," Occidental's lead counsel said, "we are dealing with serious constitutional rights in this case." Forcing Occidental to reveal its identity meant "its right to free speech is in doubt, its first amendment rights are being challenged."

The court didn't buy it. Less than five weeks before the election, Occidental was ordered to identify itself as the sponsor of the Los Angeles Public and Coastal Protection Committee in all of its electronic and printed ads, as well as in an amended statement of organization with the State of California. Occidental's disinformation campaign, however, had already done its work.

"When I really became depressed," Diamond says, "was a day or two before the election. We were calling people [from] a phone bank out in my office, and people were saying they were against oil drilling and that's why they were going to vote against O. Because they were *against* oil drilling."

But in the well-to-do Westside of Los Angeles, which embraces the Pacific Palisades, word was out about Occidental's hoax and voter turnout was heavy—with the result that O passed and P was defeated. Misunderstanding was still evident in the final

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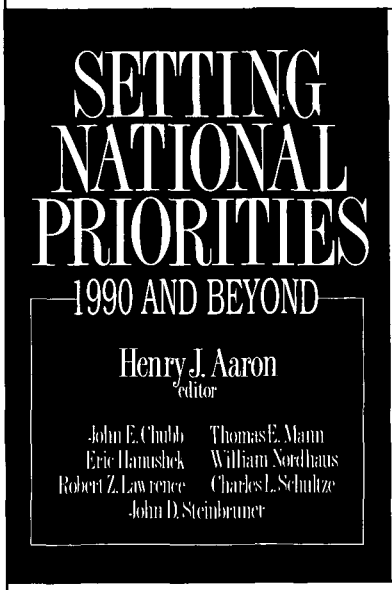

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numbers though, which suggested that of the majority who realized in time what Prop P was about, many were still misled as to the goal of Prop O. They thought it, too, was a pro-oil drilling initiative—or weren't quite sure—just as Occidental hoped.

The antidrilling coalition attributes its victory largely to the acuity of the press. Soon after the campaign began, but well before Occidental was ordered to reveal its participation, the press branded Prop P as Occidental's initiative. This helps explain the heavy negative vote against both propositions: Showing the public that Occidental was behind Prop P was much easier than reversing the image Occidental had created about Prop O. That would have entailed close analysis of campaign advertising and the facts underlying it. This is a responsibility most of the press seems unwilling to accept.

Calling a spade a card

Too often, reporters don't look past an ad's facts to tackle the larger question of its meaning. "A narrow definition of a journalist's role," says *Newsweek*'s Alter, "would be to say, 'Well we can't go any further than just pointing out the inaccuracies; it's too subjective for us to point out the basic untruthfulness.'" A journalist who sees his role in this limited way is neutralized by a clever political consultant. If the "facts" can be defended he must either keep his mouth shut or balance criticism of one candidate with equal criticism about the other. Alter calls this latter technique "phony objectivity," by which "if you say Bush is a mudslinger then you have to say that Dukakis is a mudslinger. That sounds more fair, but it's really less fair. It's less truthful."

Another source of reporters' timidity is an intrinsic tension of journalism: Reporters and their sources are at one another's mercy. There is an ever-present fear among reporters and news organizations that if they do their jobs too well, the flow of information may be cut off. One symptom of this anxiety was the distortion of language in reporting on the '88 campaign. Commercials that pandered to bigotry and misstated an opponent's record were labeled "cynical," rather than "racist" and "deceptive." The codeword "negative" diplomatically stood in for "dishonest," "misleading," "fraudulent," and "cruel." A bland, ersatz vocabulary saved the press from saying the hard things it should have said.

During the campaign, even *editorial* writers bent over backwards to appear "objective." Consider these excerpts from "The Dirty Campaign," a *Los Angeles Times* editorial that appeared two weeks before the general election:

> Some [voter indifference] is due to the two relatively colorless personalities. A lot more has to do with the deplorable and even contemptible quality of their campaigns. This has been without a doubt the nastiest and most cynical contest for the White House in recent memory. . . . Nearly two-thirds of the public, so a recent Gallup poll found, considers this year's campaign to be 'more negative' than any in the past. Both sides are blamed in about equal proportion. The cynicism behind these negative strategies derives from the obvious calculation that voters will be swayed by misrepresentations and lies because they are too stupid or uncaring to know any better.

Discussing the campaign in the abstract, the *Los Angeles Times* is willing to vent its rage. But that changes when it's time to get down to brass tacks, to say precisely who's responsible for what. Rather than risk apportioning blame itself, the newspaper resorts to polling figures to divvy up responsibility for the "dirty campaign." Telling the public what the public thinks is a lot safer than telling the public what the editors think. After all, it's "objective," "scientific"—and noncontroversial. Discussion of the campaign is transformed into discussion of perceptions about the campaign.

That *Times* editorial later mentions "what some see as a primitive appeal to racism by the Bush camp"—presumably a reference to the Willie Horton/furlough theme. But the editors are careful not to accuse—they merely relate. Why? Did the editors not think the Willie Horton ad, one of the most deceptive political spots ever created, was good support for their earlier tirade against the candidates? If it wasn't, then what is?

The editorial's charges against Dukakis are not even supported with a murky reference to someone else's opinion. What did Dukakis do that was "nasty," "deplorable," "contemptible," and "cynical"? The *Times* doesn't say. Still, to maintain their "objectivity," the editors find it necessary to even up the criticism: "[W]e have seen a campaign so devoid of serious debate and discussion," the editors write, "as to be an insult not just to the electorate but to the whole democratic process as well." Phony objectivity is an insult to the intelligent reader, and it actually rewards deceptive campaign tactics. A candidate who misrepresents himself or his opponent to steal votes can count on the media to obscure what really happened through its fondness for quoting offsetting opinions no matter what the merits of the case.

Even so, the media can't be held solely responsible for countering deceptive political advertising. Making an idea stick in the public mind takes repetition, and this gives campaign ads the upper

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hand. A deceptive spot may run dozens of times in a given market, but "you can only air your analysis of a particular commercial one time," says Professor Kanter. For that reason, the candidate on the receiving end of a deceptive attack ad is primarily responsible for setting the record straight. At this, Michael Dukakis failed miserably.

Dr. Pepper for president

Just leaving the problem to the candidates and the press won't do. The marketplace of ideas, like that of goods and services, needs regulation to work fairly. It seems odd that our society imposes tougher restrictions on the advertising claims made for soda pop and chewing gum than on the claims of people vying for control of the nuclear button. Robert Spero illustrated this odd dichotomy by analyzing political ads according to the standards applied to product commercials. It is a revealing exercise. Network broadcast-practices departments reject product commercials for many reasons, just a few of which would be enough to bar every political ad discussed in this article:

Claims lack substantiation. This criterion alone would weed out most. *Competitors not fairly identified or represented.* This test would have prevented Occidental Petroleum's role reversal. *Competitors unfairly attacked.* A good way to have blocked the cigarette industry's ad hominem attacks against the sponsors of Prop 99. *Claims or representations have the capacity to deceive or mislead.* The Harbor ad would have failed this test. *Perpetuates a damaging stereotype.* Willie Horton.

Furthermore, unlike political advertisers, product advertisers must reckon with several deterrent forces—such as consumer and competitor lawsuits and review by the FTC and the Better Business Bureaus—even before submitting ads for broadcaster approval.

Still, considering the amount of misleading information that somehow sneaks past all the stages of review and into product ads, it's clear that the current system hasn't eradicated deception in political commercials. Indeed, the Communications Act does not protect ballot-initiative commercials from broadcaster censorship, and as the two California campaigns discussed above demonstrate, the broadcasters haven't exactly put an end to deception. In fact, because broadcaster regulation has proven insufficient, Proposition 105 passed on California's 1988 ballot. It requires spoken disclosure in advertisements of the industry behind an initiative, of the largest contributor, and of whether the majority of contributions are corporate or union or from out of state.

Most fixes to the problem of deceptive political advertising face a formidable obstacle—the First Amendment. Paid candidate (as contrasted with initiative) advertisements are treated by law as "political speech," and therefore receive full protection. Whether democracy benefits by this arrangement is a good question. In the words of James Albert, a professor of law at Drake University who has written about legal remedies to deceptive campaign advertising, politicians "assert a protection that the Framers envisioned for political speech in the context of commercials that are more like the sale of dog food." Most political ads are now so removed from the ideal of political debate, and so like product advertising in their manipulation of the viewer with imagery, theatrics, and innuendo, that there is no longer a good case for treating them preferentially. Some recent attempts to restrict advertising shenanigans have been based on this argument.

Talking heads

In 1981 Democratic contenders in an Illinois township traditionally controlled by Republicans formed a group called the Representation For Every Person Party. Their advertising slogan was "Vote REP April 7." A U.S. district court judge imposed a prior restraint on the advertising material, saying that the ads were "little different from the commercial (rather than political) false advertising held unprotected." Though the Democrats said their ads were protected by the First Amendment, in ruling against them, the court cited countervailing interests—such as "the integrity of the electoral process."

The vulnerability of political ads to government sanction is further demonstrated by little-known "tell-a-lie-lose-your-job" laws recently adopted by several states. The laws are designed to take the profit out of dishonest campaign advertising. California's constitution, for instance, was amended in 1984 with a provision that can be used to strip a politician of office if he makes deceptive claims about an opponent during the election and a jury finds those claims to have been a major cause of victory. California's law applies to all local, state, and federal offices except the presidency. Ed McGovern, assistant to San Francisco Mayor Art Agnos, who sponsored the amendment, says free speech doesn't enter into the issue. "We're not denying you the right to say anything," he points out, "we just want it to be truthful."

That same principle supports the most promising political advertising reform of the several legislative proposals offered since the 1988 election. A bipartisan group of senators is cosponsoring a bill to increase candidate accountability. The proposed law,

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currently in the communications subcommittee of the Senate's Commerce Committee, would require a candidate to do the talking in any ad that discussed an opponent. Stations that failed to enforce the rule would have to give the rival free response time.

That's a good start, but does it go far enough? A better idea would be to require that *all* political ads depict the candidate, and *only* the candidate, speaking to the viewers. No more uplifting music and heartwarming scenes of Americana, no more inflammatory sequences of prison gates or escaped rapists. Candidates would have to present their messages in person, unaided by television wizardry. This reform's goal is twofold: to make it harder to influence voters without informing them, and to make candidates accountable for *everything* they say, not just for what they say about opponents.

Undoubtedly, some will object that this proposal unjustifiably restricts the First Amendment, but ultimately the criticism sounds hollow. It strains the mind to imagine a campaign process more degrading and useless than the current one. Could the situation possibly get worse if candidates were forced to *speak*? Speech, after all, is what the First Amendment is supposed to protect. Of course, such a requirement would not level the playing field completely: The great communicators—the Ronald Reagans and the FDRs—have the advantage in any forum. As one wry media commentator said recently, "Someday we might have an actor as president." On the other hand, limiting political ads this way would help ensure that voters' intuitions about a candidate have more to do with reality than with the airbrushed fantasies of political consultants. □

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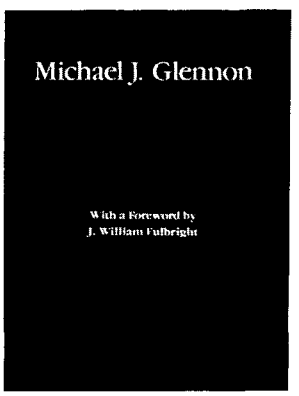

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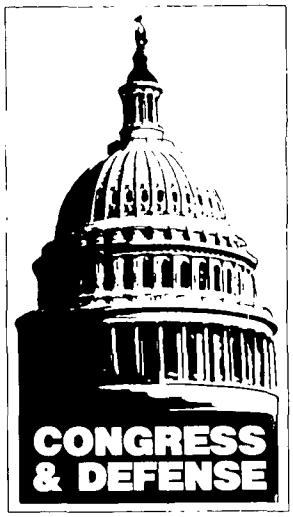

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The Kremlin's Creature Comforts

Welcome to the communists' party

by Boris Yeltsin

The party leadership is obsequious, obedient, and unchanging. An intelligent, independent-minded official of the Central Committee is a combination of words so paradoxical that one's tongue cannot even utter them.

Obsequiousness and obedience are rewarded in turn by privilege: special hospitals, special vacation retreats, the excellent Central Committee canteen, the equally excellent service for home delivery of groceries and other goods, the Kremlin telephone system, the free transportation. The higher you climb up the professional ladder, the more comforts surround you and the harder and more painful it is to lose them. Therefore, the more obedient and dependable you become. It has all been most carefully devised: A section chief does not have a personal car, but he has the right to order one from the Central Committee car pool for himself and his immediate staff. The deputy head of a department already has his personal Volga, while the head has another and better Volga, fitted with a car phone.

But if you have climbed all the way to the top of the establishment pyramid, then it's full communism! And it turns out that there was no need of the world revolution, maximum labor productivity, and universal harmony in order to have reached that ultimate, blissful state as prophesied by Karl Marx. It is perfectly possible to attain it in one particular country—for one particular group of people.

Boris Yeltsin, a member of the People's Parliament, is the author of Against the Grain *from which this article is excerpted by permission of Summit Books © 1990 by Boris Yeltsin.*

Lifestyles of the Red and Famous

In using the word "communism," I am not exaggerating. It is not simply a metaphor for an overbright communist future: "From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs." And so it is for those at the top of the party pyramid. I have already mentioned their abilities, which, alas, are not outstanding. But their needs! Their needs are so great that so far it has only been possible to create real communism for a couple of dozen people—communism is created for them by the ninth directorate of the KGB, and this all-powerful directorate can do anything. The life of a party leader is beneath its unsleeping, all-seeing eye, and it satisfies his every whim. A dacha behind a high green fence encircling spacious grounds alongside the Moscow River, with a garden, tennis courts, and playing fields, a bodyguard under every window, and an alarm system.

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Even at my level as a candidate member of the Politburo, my domestic staff consisted of three cooks, three waitresses, a housemaid, and a gardener with his own team of assistant gardeners. Surprisingly, all this luxury was incapable of producing either comfort or convenience.

It was almost impossible to meet anybody or do anything in the ordinary, normal way. If you wanted

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to go to the cinema, the theater, a museum, indeed any public place, a whole squad of heavies was sent there in advance. They would check and cordon off the whole place, and only then could you go yourself. But the dacha had its own cinema, and every Friday, Saturday, and Sunday a projectionist would arrive, complete with a selection of films.

As for medical treatment, the medicines and equipment are all imported, all of them the last word in scientific research and technology. The rooms in the Kremlin hospital are huge suites, also surrounded by luxury: porcelain, crystal, carpets, and chandeliers. Afraid of taking responsibility, an individual physician never makes an independent decision, and diagnoses and treatments are invariably agreed upon by a group of 5 to 10 doctors, sometimes including the most highly qualified specialists. Yet in Sverdlovsk I was looked after by one general practitioner, Tamara Kurushina, who knew me inside and out, always made a precise diagnosis in any situation, and prescribed the treatment herself, whether it was for a headache, a cold, or just general debility.

I regarded those faceless groups of consultants with great suspicion, and since I have gone back to

. . . Meanwhile, back at the White House

—by Ann McFeatters, Scripps Howard News Service

On chilly mornings, a cozy fire is burning in John Sununu's office when he arrives at work next to the Oval Office. Silk flowers add to the cheery office of the president's chief of staff, whose allergies rule out the fresh bouquets that decorate White House offices daily.

Lighted fires and customized flowers are just two of the many perks and benefits of working at the White House. There is a definite hierarchy to who gets what—a fireplace, an office near Mr. Bush, and a White House parking space are highly coveted and reserved for only a few dozen people.

But everybody who works in the White House gets some perks. Particularly when the president is out of town. There's the White House tennis court, the swimming pool, the horseshoe pit, the health club, the gym, the mess, the barbershop-beauty salon, the presidential box at the Kennedy Center, and the movie theater supplied with movies by the Motion Picture Association of America.

The rationale for the perks is the long hours most top staffers at the White House work. Connie Gerrard, who was assistant to the press secretary under five presidents, retired recently even though she is only in her forties. "This is the kind of job that almost consumes you," she said.

When White House aides are asked about the best perks of working at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, they invariably include "the switchboard" on the list.

The White House telephone operators are rightly legendary. They can find anyone within minutes. There are many true stories of White House staffers being located by the operators during a tryst in the wee hours of the morning.

Another perk is a daily compendium of major news stories from newspapers and television so staffers who leave home before their newspapers arrive won't look "out of the loop" when they go into 7:30 a.m. meetings. The summary is prepared by a young staff that arrives in the middle of the night.

Prized are corner offices and big windows or great views, offices with history (getting an office where somebody famous once worked is a big high), and those with unscratched furniture.

This year it will cost taxpayers $30.2 million to run the White House office, $16.3 million of that for salaries. That does not count salaries for the Secret Service or the military personnel.

Mr. Bush has a special travel budget of $100,000 by law, but that does not count the cost of operating Air Force One, which is $6,000 an hour and part of the military budget. Riding Air Force One and getting a notebook and matches with the logo are nice perks. The first time a guest rides Air Force One under the current president, he gets a certificate signed by the pilot.

Another big but rare perk is going to Camp David, the presidential retreat in Maryland's Catoctin Mountains. Mr. Bush says weekends at Camp David are the best perk of being president, but few White House employees have ever been there.

One of the best perks is going to a state dinner. Among the most elegant and coveted social events in the nation, the dinners draw celebrities from all fields. The unfortunate part is that lower-echelon staffers rarely get to go, but a few top aides must go to each one. They try to sneak out early. □

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my usual polyclinic, my head has stopped aching and I have begun to feel much better all around. I haven't been to see a doctor for several months. It may be coincidence, but it is also symbolic. When you are a member of the Politburo, your personal physician is obliged to examine you every day, but a lack of professional and personal freedom hangs over him like a sword of Damocles.

The Kremlin ration, a special allocation of normally unobtainable products, is paid for by the top echelon at half its normal price, and it consists of the highest-quality foods. In Moscow, a total of some 40,000 people enjoy the privilege of these special rations, in various categories of quantity and quality. There are whole sections of GUM—the huge department store that faces the Kremlin across Red Square—closed to the public and specially reserved for the highest of the elite, while for officials a rung or two lower on the ladder there are other special shops. And so on down the scale, all organized by rank. All are called "special": special workshops, special dry cleaners, special polyclinics, special hospitals, special houses, special services. What a cynical use of the word! A specialist is supposed to be someone who has a particular training or talent. There was a time when a highly skilled craftsman really was a specialist. Nowadays in our country the word "special" has a specific meaning, of which we are all too well aware. It is applied to the excellent food products that are prepared in special kitchens and are subjected to special medical tests; to the medicines packed in several layers of wrapping paper and guaranteed safe by the signatures of several doctors (only medicine certified in this way can be given to the Kremlin elite). How many such special people are there, one wonders, pampered by the system even in what seem like the most insignificant details?

When the elite want to go on vacation, they can choose virtually any place in the warm south. There is bound to be a special dacha there. For the rest of the year these dachas are empty. There are other opportunities to go on leave too, because a two-week winter holiday supplements the summer break. Excellent sports facilities exist for "special" use only, for example on the Lenin Hills—indoor and outdoor tennis courts, a large swimming pool, and a sauna. Then there are the personal airplanes, an IL-62 or a TU-134, in which a Central Committee secretary, a candidate member, or a full member of the Politburo flies alone, except for his bodyguard and the cabin crew.

The joke is that none of these riches belong to those who enjoy the special privileges. All these marvelous things—dachas, rations, a stretch of seaside fenced off from everyone else—belong to the system. And just as the system has given them, so can it take them away. It is an idea of pure genius. A man—Ivanov, say, or Petrov—climbs his way up the career ladder, and the system gives him one class of special privileges. Then, as he rises higher, another class. The higher he goes, the more special are the delights handed out to him. Soon Ivanov begins to think he is an important person. He eats what ordinary mortals only dream of, takes his holidays in places where the proletariat are not even allowed to come near the surrounding fence. And stupid Ivanov doesn't realize that it is not *he* who is being thus favored by the position he occupies, and that if he suddenly stops serving the system faithfully, Petrov or somebody else will instantly be put in his place. Within this system nothing belongs to the individual. Stalin cunningly brought this machinery to such a state of perfection that even the wives of his immediate colleagues did not belong to them. They, too, belonged to the system. The system could take those wives away and imprison them, just as Stalin imprisoned the wives of Kalinin and Molotov, and neither man dared to utter so much as a squeak of protest.

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Times have changed, but the essence of the system remains the same. As before, a wide selection of perks is being handed out to the position that a person occupies, but each "gift"—from a soft armchair with its numbered metal tag on up to the bottle of normally unavailable medicine stamped "safe" by the fourth directorate of the KGB—bears the seal of the system. This is so the individual (who, as before, is no more than a little cog in the machine) will never forget to whom all this really belongs.

Here are some examples of the privilege system, based on my own experience. Every Central Committee secretary, every member or candidate member of the Politburo, is assigned an officer in charge of his bodyguard; this man is his aide-de-camp and organizes his life. My bodyguard commander, a most attentive man, was named Yuri Fyodorovich. One of his chief duties was to see to the fulfillment of any wish that might be expressed by his . . . I almost said lord and master, for whose safety and comfort he was responsible.

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Party favors

Sometimes this essentially cynical system will exhibit an equally cynical lapse where the immediate family members of the head of the clan are concerned. When, for instance, the chief bodyguard was instructing my wife and children that they must not feed me fruit and vegetables bought in the market because they might be poisoned, one of my daughters asked timidly whether she and my wife might eat market-bought produce. She was told that they could but that I must not. In other words, you can go ahead and be poisoned, but he is sacred.

Muscovites usually stop and watch whenever a government ZIL flashes past, with a hiss of tires, at

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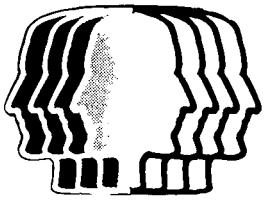

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great speed. They do not watch out of any great respect for the occupant of the car but because it is really an impressive sight. Even before the ZIL has driven out of your gateway, the police all along your route have been notified. The lights are green all the way, the car races ahead without a stop, and you drive quickly and pleasantly. Senior party officials have forgotten that there are such things as traffic jams and red lights.

Politburo members are escorted by an additional car, a Volga. When I received a number of threatening letters, I was allotted a Volga to accompany me. Thus for a while it became impossible to kill me. I was surrounded by extra guards. Fortunately, they were soon reassigned.

The ZIL, however, was with me around the clock. Wherever I might be, the car and its radio were always near. If I drove out of town to spend the night at the dacha, the driver was put up in a special lodge so as to be ready to drive away at any moment. The dacha is a story in itself. As I mentioned earlier, before it was assigned to me, it had been occupied by Gorbachev, who had moved into another, specially built for him.

When I drove up to the dacha for the first time, I was met at the door by the commander of the bodyguard, who introduced me to the domestic staff. Then we began our inspection of the house. Even from the outside I had been overwhelmed by the size of the place. I entered a hall measuring about 30 by 15 feet, with an enormous fireplace, marble paneling, parquet floor, large carpets, chandeliers, and luxurious furniture. We went on, passing through first one room, then a second, a third, and a fourth, each of which sported a television set. Also on the ground floor was an enormous veranda with a glass roof, and a small movie theater-cum-billiard room. I lost count of the number of bathrooms and lavatories. There was a dining room with an incredible 30-foot-long table and behind it a kitchen big enough to feed an army, with a refrigerator that constituted a separate underground room. We went up the steps of a broad staircase to the second floor. Again there was a vast hallway with an open fireplace, and a door opened into the solarium, furnished with rocking chairs and *chaise longues*. After that came the study, the bedrooms, two more rooms intended for I know not what, more lavatories and bathrooms. Everywhere was crystal, antique and modern chandeliers, oak and parquet floors.

And who pays for all this? The KGB. It would be interesting to know, by the way, how all this expenditure is accounted for and under what heading of the KGB's budget. Combating spies? Subversion of foreigners by bribery? Or perhaps a more romantic heading, such as satellite intelligence in space.

I believe that perestroika would not have ground to a halt if only Gorbachev had been able to get rid of his reluctance to deal with the question of the leadership's privileges—if he himself had renounced all those completely useless, though pleasant, customary perquisites.

There is also a wide choice of places at which to spend one's holidays: Pitsunda and Gagra on the Georgian coast of the Black Sea; the Crimea; the Valdai Hills, a beautiful region midway between Moscow and Leningrad. These summer dachas are as luxurious as the year-round residences. One is driven to the beach by car, even though the distance is no more than a couple of hundred yards. I used to walk as part of my attempt to get a little exercise. I also organized two volleyball teams. My daughter and I, my assistant, and my driver played against the guards. They were young, strong, and fit, but even so we often won. In short, I tried my best to introduce something human, competitive, and energetic into that oasis of artificial communist perfection.

It may be a somewhat controversial opinion of mine, but I do believe that *perestroika* would not have ground to a halt, despite the tactical mistakes that have been made, if only Gorbachev had been able to get rid of his reluctance to deal with the question of the leadership's privileges—if he himself had renounced all those completely useless, though pleasant, customary perquisites; if he had not built a new house for himself on the Lenin Hills and a new dacha outside Moscow; if he had not had his dacha at Pitsunda rebuilt and then an ultramodern one put up at Thorosin in the Crimea. And then, to cap it all, at the Congress of People's Deputies he announced with pathos that he has no personal dacha. Doesn't he realize how hypocritical that sounded? □

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TIDBITS & OUTRAGES

RABID TRANSIT

The New York Times reports that when the former head of RJR Nabisco, Ross Johnson, traveled by air, he frequently booked flights for a "G. Shepard" on another private plane going to the same destination, and that when RJR was taken over last year, investigators from the new management discovered that Mr. Shepard was actually Johnson's dog, traveling separately because of a tendency to bite people.

SECRETARIAT OF DEFENSE

The Washington Times reports that the Air Force is paying $100,000 for a study to find out how much jet noise pregnant horses can stand.

COMING SOON: "COUCH"

The product line of Avia walking shoes includes not just models called "Trail" and "Track," but also one called "Mall."

NAME ONE

A Manhattan appeals court ruled that a police officer who reached into the front of a man's pants and found 10 ounces of cocaine there had conducted an illegal search. The judge's opinion in the case states that "there are a number of inherently innocuous objects which could have been the cause of a bulge in this area."

WHAT'S FREUDIAN FOR CHUTZPAH?

The Massachusetts state licensing board for doctors has charged Boston psychiatrist Sheldon Zigelbaum with sexually abusing four female patients and also with asking one of their husbands for a $6,000 loan to defend himself against the abuse allegations.

THANK GOD THAT FILIPINO RABBI STROLLED BY

In San Jose, a 15- by 30-foot multilingual banner costing about $6,500 had to be removed right before the rededication ceremony at a public library because the Tagalog word on it that library personnel thought meant "welcome" actually meant "circumcised."

SEMPER FIDO

When questioned by the House Armed Services Committee about the wisdom of the Army's building a $16,000 on-base pet cemetery, the Army replied: "This is consistent with the Army's training and doctrine commands, installation of excellence. The pet burial facility was developed in a manner consistent with this philosophy. While not extravagant, it was done in good taste."

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WE CRACKED THE BARRY CASE FIRST

While the national media kept silent about the disgraceful performance of Washington, D.C. mayor Marion Barry—and while *The Washington Post* was still endorsing Barry for re-election—we were uncovering the Barry administration's incompetence and corruption—ahead not only of the *Post*, but of *The New Republic* and local Washington magazines as well.

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➥ Years *before* the Challenger disaster, we warned that the space shuttle was unsafe, saying, "Here's the plan. Suppose one of the solid-fueled boosters fails. The plan is, you die."

➥ Months *before* the stock market crash in 1987, we warned that the programmed trading and low-margin stock options could turn a bad day into Black Monday.

➥ Months *before* the Iran-Contra scandal broke in newspapers, we warned readers, "This National Security Council staff is the worst in history."

➥ Three years before the downfall of House Speaker Jim Wright, *The Washington Monthly* warned its readers: "If Tip O'Neill seems like the sort of guy who would write out a taxpayer endorsed check to everyone who tried to sell him swampland in Florida, Jim Wright seems more like the guy selling the land."

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Beyond Money: Replacing the Gold Standard with the Golden Rule

Want to be rich in a currency that's unlimited, inflation-proof, and can't be devalued by foreign investors?

by Jonathan Rowe and Steven Waldman

Elsa Martinez sat up in her hospital bed last December wondering aloud what would happen after she died. Who would take care of her ailing brother? Would the rest of the family stay far away? Doctors had just told Martinez she had a brain tumor. Her eyes were watery, her lower lip drooped. Still, the 64-year-old former garment worker managed a smile when four women entered her room with flowers and faces of consolation. They kissed her and patted her arm softly, a show of affection one might expect from a family member or longtime friend.

But these visitors were neither. Rather, they were participants in Friend to Friend, an unusual program run by South Shore Hospital in Miami. For several months in 1987 Martinez had helped other seniors by shopping, cleaning, and driving them around. For each hour she volunteered, Martinez earned a "service credit," which was logged in a computer at the hospital. Then last year she broke her leg and found herself unable to travel or do things for herself. So she started "spending" her credits by requesting help. Fellow participants in the program—each earning credits themselves—came to keep her company and help with chores. "When you're sick, they come," she whispered from her hospital bed. "Before I was alone." The volunteers kept coming until Martinez died.

Jonathan Rowe and Steven Waldman are contributing editors of The Washington Monthly.

Time dollars

As Congress ponders a new $40 billion proposal for care of the elderly, as it moves to spend billions more on day care for children, Friend to Friend and programs like it offer a grassroots complement to such government efforts. On one level, they are simply updates of the old neighborhood baby-sitting club. Help a neighbor, and somewhere down the line a neighbor will help you.

But at the same time the "time dollars"—as the credits are called—represent a radical new approach to the way Americans think about social services, about money, even about economics. Begun in Missouri and Washington, D.C. in 1985, the idea has spread to Brooklyn, San Francisco, Boston, Miami, and several locales in Michigan. These programs began with simple helping tasks, such as taking seniors

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to the social security office or mowing a lawn. They are expanding slowly to include a wider range of services, such as work in child-care centers and neighborhood law offices.

The response to the idea suggests that Americans are eager for a way to repair the defects of the market economy without erecting more costly bureaucracy. When Ralph Nader advocated service credits on a recent "Inside Edition" segment, he got 30,000 requests for his new primer on the subject. "I have rarely seen an idea that has a higher predictability of sweeping the country," Nader observed recently. This appeal extends to countries treading cautiously into the free-market model. The new government in Poland, for example, is actively exploring the service credit idea.

At first, the notion seems to corrupt the spirit of volunteerism by offering rewards for things people ought to do for free. But in practice, the credits strengthen volunteerism by providing a context of reciprocity that turns service into a real economic force, rather than just a right-wing bromide to avoid facing social needs. Service credits could be the coin of a new economy that rewards service rather than monetary gain, unhinging endeavor from the acquisitive market place and setting it free to do the work that society really needs done. "It uses market-like incentives, but it draws on altruism, a desire to help, a need to be needed," says Edgar Cahn, a professor at the University of the District of Columbia Law School and the leader of the service credit movement. "People society labels as problems, this system labels as *resources*."

Social disservice

There is a popular notion that Miami Beach retirees all live in condo splendor on the proceeds of their ample stock portfolios. However, the problem of fractured families and communities is particularly acute there. Many retirees live month-to-month on Social Security and modest pensions. They can't afford private nurses or attendants, and they've left their children and friends behind in the North. They struggle to stay out of nursing homes, which many could afford only by "spending down" far enough into poverty that Medicaid would step in. State studies have shown that what seniors need most is not expensive medical care but help—with transportation, chores, housekeeping, and the like. But in Florida, only 4 percent of seniors, and 13 percent of seniors in poverty, get government help with these kinds of services.

The flip side of this picture, however, is a staggering resource: legions of older people with time on their hands and more energy than they are given credit for. In 1985, Cahn proposed legislation to nest a service credit program in the Florida human resources department. The Democratic leadership took hold of the measure, and they were joined by conservatives who loved the volunteerism and minimal government outlay. "This is the first good idea you've had since you've been in the Senate," a conservative Democrat told the more liberal majority leader. Resistance came from social service activists. "The first knee-jerk response was that Ronald Reagan would use it as an excuse to cut" government spending, Cahn recalls. "So they gave us a sit-on-your-hands posture."

The program goes far beyond simply providing a source of cheap labor for social service groups. The credits can also help break down barriers that isolate individuals.

What happened next is like a parody of the credentialed social-service mind at work. Cahn's original idea was that the state provide bookkeeping and technical support to grassroots programs. Instead the bureaucracy tried to remake these programs in its own image. The social work professionals had visions of untrained hordes lumbering into their realm of "client-provider interaction." Hoi polloi without master's degrees in gerontology might perform such technical tasks as cooking lunch for a bedridden man! To forestall such impending "disasters," Margaret Lynn Duggar, the head of the state human resources agency, made a series of decisions that would have been hilarious had they not strangled the program.

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First, she mandated that service credits be tallied on a Burroughs computer data base; unfortunately, none of the participating community centers had Burroughs computers. Next, according to Duggar's lawyers, state law required that the program purchase expensive workers' compensation insurance in addition to low-cost volunteer insurance. Since there were no "experience ratings" for this new job category, the volunteers were dumped into the high-cost assigned risk-pool.

Service credits expired in Florida without ever having started. Naturally, the next move was to spend $20,000 in leftover funds on program evaluation. The bureaucrats surveyed state agencies on whether it would have worked. The agencies responded that of course it wouldn't.

And what about those scheming oldsters who might enter a sickly woman's apartment to steal the dishes under the pretense of washing them? Duggar and the legal staff said the state would have to perform a police check on each volunteer. (Eventually she was persuaded that fingerprinting 70-year-old grandmothers might not be necessary.) Finally, there was a prolonged struggle over the question of credit glut. What would happen if someday there weren't enough new participants to pay back the credits people had already earned? After much wrangling, the state solemnly agreed to "guarantee" the credits.

The department finally gave a green light to local programs on May 6, 1986. There was only one problem: the legislation had authorized the program only through June 30, 1986.

Service credits in Florida expired without ever having started. Naturally, the department's next move was to spend $20,000 in leftover funds on program evaluation. Since the bureaucrats couldn't study how it did work, they surveyed state agencies on whether they thought it would have worked. The agencies responded that of course it wouldn't; who would volunteer for such drudgery as cleaning house for a bedridden person they didn't even know? Cahn believes the bureaucrats' real concern was that people actually *would* volunteer. "If this program really starts to work, someone might ask if you really need all this money" for social programs, he says.

Florida's destruction of service credits turned out to be a blessing. Forced to search for private help, Cahn approached the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, which specializes in pilot projects in the social service area. In 1986, the foundation issued about $1.2 million in grants to start experiments in Brooklyn, San Francisco, Miami, and Boston and to expand incipient programs in Washington D.C. and Missouri.

Nothing for money

The basic mechanics of these programs are quite simple. A church, hospital, or other organization establishes a computer record of volunteer work, acting in effect as the central bank. Volunteers report their hours and get credits they can draw on later. When someone needs help, they call a program manager, who then assigns a volunteer interested in performing the task. Programs are as diverse as the communities they serve: the South Shore Hospital in Miami refers its frail senior patients to the program when they're discharged. In Brooklyn, the service credits program is run by an organization called Elderplan, a nonprofit Health maintenance organization. Often the elderly are forced into expensive and degrading nursing homes, not because they are hopelessly infirm but only because they need help with everyday tasks—washing dishes, cashing the social security check, or cleaning the bathroom. Service credits have enabled Elderplan to help more seniors sustain themselves, making their lives better and, as a bonus, helping keep insurance premiums under control.

Etta Goldsmith of Ocean Avenue in Brooklyn has to take care of all the shopping because her husband is very ill. But she's having problems with her eyes and shopping is a challenge. Frank Vuolo, on the other hand, a retired dockworker and dry-cleaning shop owner who loves to keep busy, has strong eyes and a humming Pontiac. Elderplan matched him with Goldsmith, and now every Thursday morning, Vuolo loads her shopping cart into the back seat of his car and drives her to the Key Supermarket in Sheepshead Bay. "I had a hard time," she confided one day last winter, fishing coupons out of a rumpled envelope in

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Photo courtesy: The United Way of America

the checkout line. "If it weren't for you," she told Vuolo, "I'd be lost."

Through 100 volunteers like Vuolo, Elderplan keeps the annual HMO premium down to a very affordable $440 a year by providing help that otherwise would fall to social work professionals or wouldn't get done at all. Participants can cut their health insurance costs further by using service credits to pay up to 25 percent of the annual bill. In turn, the volunteers themselves feel younger and healthier because they are active helpers, rather than declining objects of concern.

In Miami, where Friend to Friend, the largest service credits program is based, the Little Havana Activities and Nutrition Center delivers 1,600 meals daily to fragile seniors. Government funds cover the

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cost of the meals, but before service credits, the center did not have the resources to offer additional services, such as escorting or telephone follow-up. But Friend to Friend recruited volunteers who now deliver these services along with the meals. The service credits program has doubled the number of volunteers at the center. Countywide, the Friend to Friend program has recruited 847 volunteers who contribute 8,000 hours of service each month.

While the first Miami program was suffocated by bureaucracy, this one remains limber and efficient. In Miami the volunteers are supervised by one full-time coordinator, one part-time official, and 10 VISTA volunteers—all senior citizens themselves. (The Miami program got the VISTA slots in part because the Cuban community was well connected to the Republican White House.) Including overhead, the Miami programs deliver services for a monetary outlay of about $1.31 an hour, a fraction of the cost of similar services in the private sector. There is little need for training because most services are neighborly and simple. Also, participants draw effectively upon intuition and common sense. Daisy Alexander, a 73-year-old volunteer in Miami, helps slow-learning children grasp vowel sounds through simple songs. Asked how, she giggles and starts singing. "I want some pie! Oh my, oh my. I want some pie. Oh my! Oh my."

The program goes far beyond simply providing a source of cheap labor for social service groups. The credits can also help break down barriers that isolate individuals. Friend to Friend has encouraged an unusual level of cultural mixing in a racially tense and segregated city. In Miami, as elsewhere, the practice has been for black churches to help needy blacks, for Hispanic groups to help their own, and so on. Friend to Friend, by contrast, starts by assigning stranger to stranger. Blacks and Hispanics who never communicated in their own housing projects are now bringing each other lunch every day. The only thing Bolous Chamoun, a stocky 70-year-old Lebanese man, would seem to have in common with Eleuteria Alfonso, a 4-foot-tall 82-year-old Cuban-American woman, is that neither can speak English. But Chamoun's face brightened when Alfonso visited him at the hospital last December. Not long before, she had delivered a lunch to his apartment and found him collapsed on the floor. Now, as Alfonso leaves Chamoun's hospital room after another visit, she whispers to a friend, "I get so worried about him." On her way out, she turns back to wave goodbye.

Clearly, volunteers can't perform every function that a professional can; they are not trained to give medicine, for example. But often what people need is something fairly simple. An elderly woman in Brooklyn was struggling with Lou Gehrig's disease and her husband was attending to her round-the-clock. They qualified for publicly funded home care, which would have helped with everything from cooking meals to making the bed. But they declined it. Dorothy Gochal, a Brooklyn housewife who became an Elderplan volunteer after her husband died several years ago, understood how disruptive such "help" can seem. "When a couple take care of one another, they get used to that routine," she says. They cook the eggs a certain way, for instance, tuck in the sheets a certain way. "Somebody else does it differently, so they reject it." To the elderly, social workers present other problems as well. "They don't want to talk to some young girl in her thirties about the death of their husband," says Gochal, who realized that the couple had a much simpler but urgent need: to have company. So she did what a professional social worker usually doesn't have time to do—"I did nothing," she says with offhanded self-effacement. "I sat and watched soap operas with them, like a friend. They didn't have a circle of friends they could call on."

Queen of aides

But is Dorothy Gochal really a volunteer? She is, after all, receiving a form of pay. "We feel that one of the basic tenets of voluntary service is not receiving a quid pro quo," said an official of the American Red Cross in congressional testimony against the service credits approach. This is perhaps the most frequent reservation about the service credit idea. Leaving aside that paid professionals in such organizations as the Red Cross get *their* quid pro quo in the form of salaries, it is a legitimate question. At first blush, the answer is a paradox: the part of service credits that looms largest to the economic mind—the credits—does not seem awfully important to the people involved. "For me the credits don't mean nothing at all," Frank Vuolo says. "It's my pleasure, my enjoyment, if I can help somebody in need." In fact, seniors aren't even cashing in their credits. Of the roughly 96,000 credits earned in Miami, only 3 percent have ever been spent.

Yet the credits clearly do make a difference. Volunteers flock to the programs, and dropout rates are only about 3 percent, compared to about 40 percent for conventional volunteer programs. How can earned credits be both key to the program and seemingly unimportant to the volunteers? Ana Miyares, Miami's dynamic program coordinator, explains their role by mimicking a fisherman casting a line. "Service credits provide the hook, but once people are here, they love helping." Dorothy Gochal has be-

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TENTATIVE AGENDA

CALIFORNIA DEMOCRATIC PARTY CONVENTION

LOS ANGELES, APRIL 6-8, 1990
LOS ANGELES CONVENTION CENTER

FRIDAY, APRIL 6, 1990

1:00-4:00pm	Rules Committee Meeting
3:00pm-5:00pm	Credentials Committee Meeting
4:00pm-9:00pm	Registration
4:30pm-6:00pm	Women's Caucus
6:00pm-7:30pm	Caucuses:
	African-American
	Asian-Pacific
	Chicano/Latino
	Environmental
	Rural
	Seniors
7:30pm-9:00pm	Welcoming Session
9:00pm-10:30pm	Caucuses:
	Business/Professional
	California Democratic Council
	Disabilities
	Environmental/Rural
	Filipino-American
	Gay/Lesbian
	Labor
	Rainbow Coalition
	Young Democrats
9:30pm-11:00pm	Credentials Committee
	Platform Committee
10:30pm	Computer Club
	Hospitality Suites

Continued on next page

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come so energized by her experience in Brooklyn that she took a special course that Elderplan has started, to learn to help those with serious emotional problems. Today she has the poise of a veteran and a peppy enthusiasm for her work. "I'm really enjoying it," she says. "I intend to keep it up."

For some, the credits do serve as a kind of reward—a pat on the back for helping others. That's one reason they have the potential for producing more good than purely voluntary programs. You become rich (and therefore worthwhile) not by earning lots of money but by doing lots of good. Cassie Mae Brown, a Miami volunteer, earned low wages her whole life as a nurse's aide. But now she is the Donald Trump of service credits, playing a game she can win. During a typical day in December, Brown rose before dawn to drive one man to his dialysis appointment, visited another woman who called for companionship, and stopped by to see Elsa Martinez at the hospital. Last year Brown earned an honor equivalent to making the Forbes 500: she won the Service Credit Volunteer of the Year for racking up 570 hours. The credits, she says, "make me feel like I'm somebody."

Many volunteer programs offer certificates of recognition for the hardworking. So what's wrong with a certificate that entitles the bearer to receive help in times of need? Cassie Mae Brown actually has 570 hours of service coming to her. And because the credits have worth, the volunteer can feel not only more valued but less of a burden. Volunteers often point out that accruing credits will enable them to be more self-sufficient later, less dependent on their children. "We are like an insurance policy you take out," says Terrie Raphael, director of Elderplan. "Except you don't pay with your money; you pay with your time."

At the same time, the credit system helps give *recipients* a sense of dignity. Instead of receiving charity, they are undertaking an obligation that they will pay back if they can. "You don't feel like you're infringing on anybody," Herbert Kilby, a 65-year-old participant in the Washington, D.C. program, told *The Washington Post*. Kilby had earned credits in part by driving another senior to the airport. When he recently had to undergo heart surgery, he told the program managers, who checked their computer and found a volunteer who could drive him to the hospital. "I've been on both sides of the fence," he says. "You help somebody; they help you."

"The real wealth of a society is not money," says Edgar Cahn, a leader of the service credit movement. "It is the time of its citizens. Why couldn't we create a new kind of money to pay people, money not controlled by the government or the politicians and used to pay people to meet the needs of society?"

This all adds up to the kind of social accounting that used to occur naturally in stable, small-town settings. People kept rough tallies of who had pitched in when needed and dealt out their own efforts accordingly: Sally helped at the church picnic, so Marge takes charge of Sally's cub scout den one afternoon. But that doesn't happen so much in an age in which people move all the time and relationships tend to be contractual and financial rather than personal. Service credits are a formal way of bringing back that kind of long-lost informal fellowship. Frank Vuolo puts it another way. "Makin' like a family," he says.

Infirmity: father of invention

Edgar Cahn first started thinking about this approach in 1981 during the first months of the Reagan administration while he was lying in a hospital bed, recovering from a heart attack. For the first time in his adult life he was totally dependent—"relegated to the role of a consumer of services," he recalls. The role did not sit well with him. A quietly eloquent man, he had spent the previous two decades on the front lines of legal reform. Back in the 1960s, he wrote the article for the *Yale Law Journal* that lay the conceptual groundwork for the National Legal Services Program, which he helped establish with his wife, Jean Camper Cahn. Then they started the Antioch Law School (now the D.C. Law School), the first dedicated entirely to training public interest lawyers.

These experiences made Cahn wary of bureaucratized solutions to social problems. Public defenders fought the legal services program, for example, arguing that any new public funding should go to themselves. Like most entrenched service providers, they resisted encroachments on their turf. Then Antioch Law School became ensnarled in internal debates about hierarchy, pay, and similar matters. Cahn began thinking about market dynamics as an antidote to

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such institutional self-absorption and entrenched interest.

As Cahn lay on his hospital bed, his frustration with bureaucratized well-doing meshed with his new sense of helplessness. He was getting a taste of what millions of Americans experience when they are tossed aside because they are old or because a factory closes and there is no other market for their skills. Their time just sits there, like an enormous reservoir of oil just a few feet below the ground. Yet there are equally enormous needs for such time, as a stroll through virtually any nursing home, homeless shelter, or inner-city high school reveals. And these problems will almost certainly become worse. The growth of the elderly population, for example, has coincided with dramatic escalations in the cost of medical care. How do we put these unmet needs and unused people together?

Cassie Mae Brown earned low wages her whole life as a nurse's aide. But now she is the Donald Trump of service credits, playing a game she can win. The credits, she says, "make me feel like I'm somebody."

Conventional free-market thinking treats this gap as an afterthought. A need doesn't become economically valid—doesn't become "demand"—until it brings dollars to the table. Donald Trump's desire for a 282-foot yacht constitutes "demand"; Elsa Martinez's need for companionship does not. Instead, it slips into the economic netherworld for someone else to take care of. And that's usually no one.

"The real wealth of a society is not money," Cahn says. "It is the time of its citizens. Why couldn't we create a new kind of money to pay people," he asks, "money not controlled by the government or the politicians and used to pay people to meet the needs of society?"

The political right makes much of how the federal government supposedly has weakened the American family. But the market economy has done at least as much to undermine the ability of families and communities to solve their own problems, finding ways to sell people things that they used to do for themselves—turning life functions into commodities bought with money. Sometimes the result is comic. An example is a popular item at exercise clubs called the Stairmaster. This is an electric device that replicates the exertion of walking up stairs. It makes for a fine workout, yet stairs are hardly in short supply across the land.

The results are more serious when the functions in question are the human interactions that provide families and communities with their cohesive strength. When people get their meals at McDonald's, their entertainment at the video store, their child care at Kindercare, their sense of safety from burglar alarms—when they have to resort to lawyers to settle disputes with their neighbors—then human connections suffer an important loss. The process has gone way past the point of legitimate convenience and is instead a destructive force in American life today. The market economy "cannibalizes"—in Cahn's word—the life functions of families and communities, corroding the connective tissue that would enable them to deal with crime, drugs, and other problems. Liberals have tended to fixate on solving these problems by taxing the market economy and using the proceeds for government programs. Although there are plenty of social ills that require continuing and larger infusions of tax dollars, it's a mistake to think that only dollars will help. At bottom, that line of thinking is just another form of money dependency—one that has inspired a widespread public resentment of taxes and bureaucracy that the right has skillfully exploited.

For years people have been trying to devise alternative economic systems—new forms of money—to avoid the dysfunctions of the free market. The agrarian populists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries devised sophisticated proposals for wresting control of the medium of exchange from the big city bankers. And in 1936, Upton Sinclair ran for governor of California on a "production for use" platform, advocating that unemployed workers be put to work in idle factories and vacant fields, to be paid in the form of vouchers redeemable for the fruits of their labor. Even today, billions of dollars worth of goods and services are exchanged through barter arrangements. A young lawyer we know, for example, helps struggling artists in exchange for paintings for his foyer.

But the problem with barter has always been that

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it requires what economists call "a double coincidence of want." The optometrist who helps the blacksmith must happen to need some metalwork or else the repayment is unfair. In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Atticus Finch was repaid for his legal help with a bushel of potatoes. But what if he didn't like potatoes? Service credits improve upon the barter of volunteer services in the same way the creation of money improved upon the barter of goods. As a fungible currency, credits enable a volunteer to be repaid with a service that he or she actually needs. They help reclaim the territory that the corporate economy has absorbed, and to rebuild the social affinities that economy has eroded. "Turning strangers into neighbors," Cahn says. Moreover, they escape one of the most vexing characteristics of straight barter: how to value each good or service. How many potatoes equal one court case?

Service credits assume that one hour of endeavor to help someone in need is equal to any other hour of endeavor to help someone in need. Period. Where standard dollars are ultimately controlled by the bankers on the Federal Reserve Board, time dollars are limited only by the desire of citizens to be helpful. What's more, they are inflation-proof (hours don't get shorter). Where conventional money is morally neutral and knows no loyalty to organization or even country, time dollars are a cohesive force that can hold communities together in a web of reciprocal service.

Mass appeal

A happy feature of service credits is the breadth of their appeal. Since the idea does not parse out along conventional ideological lines, both the left and the right have reasons to claim it as their own. To date, virtually every group that has adopted the idea is a liberal-style social service agency. Yet conservative legislators have responded warmly as well. In Washington, Cahn has heard not just from Senator Al Gore, but also from the "points of light" team at the Bush White House. It almost seems an answer to Republican prayers, a way to show compassion without raising taxes or adding to a bloated and politically hostile public bureaucracy. Service credits make human helpfulness look more like a marketplace—more like economics—and hence more congenial to the conservative mind.

Not surprisingly, this is why liberals are suspicious of the idea. A smokescreen for more budget cuts, they say. Many on the left feel cheated if any solutions come about without the sturm and drang of class conflict. And liberals have to worry about their constituents among the public employee unions and social work establishment, both of which can feel threatened by the idea.

But these groups can relax. There's plenty of work to go around. Service credit programs won't replace professional social workers but rather enable them to do what the taxpayers pay them to do. A study in England found that paid home-care workers spend 80 percent of their time shopping and going to the post office for their clients' benefit checks. Such professional caretakers should be freed to perform tasks volunteers really can't do, like administering medication and dealing with severe emotional problems. The result would be more effective programs (and even more status for those professionals).

A valuable investment

Creating a brand new currency is bound to entail some difficulties. That volunteers are not cashing in their credits—not demanding their quid pro quo enough—is an enviable problem to have but it is a potential problem nonetheless. Some volunteers don't even bother to log the hours they've worked. Others just don't like to ask for help, even when they've earned it. Miami volunteer Adelaide Roach, age 69, for example, complained that when she became sick recently, no one visited her. "They have my number," she said with a pout. "They could have called." But there was a reason no one came: Roach never asked. If people don't spend their time dollars, the service credits don't function as an alternative economic system.

The key is to stimulate the supply side. The more services available, and perceived as available, the more people will spend credits. The economists call this liquidity. But people with needs will call it help. Supervisors of the Missouri program have encouraged credit spending by actually creating new services. Mostly, though, they continually remind volunteers of what their time dollars can already buy. "Many of the old are so afraid," explains Richard Gram, executive director of Grace Hill Neighborhood Services in St. Louis, which runs the state's program. "We've had zero-degree temperatures and they'll walk through the cold to the store. We say, 'Look, there's nothing wrong [in spending the credits] to get a ride.'"

This year the Grace Hill Service Credit Program will take the most important pump-priming step of all: expanding to include participants under age 65. A young couple who help a senior citizen shovel snow can use their credits to get a baby-sitter. On such an expanded plan, even people who are not sickly will have cause to spend their credits. Miami will soon try a similar experiment. Seniors will help staff legal ser-

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vice offices in exchange for free legal help. (Here's a pleasant surprise: The IRS has declared such exchanges tax-free because they aren't undertaken for profit and hence are not what the tax code calls "commercial barter.")

Once one really begins to think of time dollars as a currency, the possibilities seem endless. College students could use them to pay their tuition. Homeless people could build up credits through work at shelters. Public housing tenants could pay off part of their rent by providing services in their buildings. Seniors could use credits to buy insurance, the way members do at Elderplan. Local governments could develop programs to encourage more involvement from citizens: people who volunteer to patrol the subway at night, for example, could get subway passes in return. Eventually, individual programs could link up their computers as banks do now, only this time to establish a state or national market in good works.

But there is a wonderful difference between this new currency and the one we're used to: Bankruptcy is not much of a problem. If Elsa Martinez had been paying for a nurse, she would have been abandoned once her bank account emptied. But when her service credit account ran dry, the women who originally came to call on her as anonymous volunteers did not stop visiting. They continued to call on their friend until she died and then mourned at her funeral. Service credits, it turns out, even earn interest and pay dividends. □

WHO'S WHO

Does **Nicholas Brady** think someone else is secretary of the treasury and that he is merely a friend of the president who has been given a nice office next door to the White House? Observers here are becoming increasingly suspicious that such thoughts must be the explanation for Brady's pale performance thus far. It's not that he's stupid: as chairman of the Brady Commission after the 1987 stock market crash, he seemed to understand much of what had gone wrong. It's just that he seems to feel removed from responsibility for using his authority as the nation's chief financial officer to right the wrongs in the financial system. . . .

Those who read Alexander Kippen's article in our February issue will recall its report that in 1982, **Alex Kosinski**, who then headed the Office of Special Counsel, which was supposed to make sure that whistleblowers got a fair hearing, was forced to resign after being accused of teaching federal managers how to fire whistleblowers. We have since learned that **Ronald Reagan** rewarded Kosinski with an appointment to the United States Court of Appeals on the Ninth Circuit, where he now sits. . . .

Speaking of whistleblowers, **James Watkins**, the secretary of energy, has ordered DOE contractors not to discriminate against the contractors' employees who file complaints about violation of safety and environmental rules. Karen Silkwoods will be protected from unjust retaliation by the contractor. . . .

Watkins, by the way, was recently red-faced when one of his subordinates mistakenly faxed to governors around the country a confidential list of various environmental disasters in which the DOE had a hand. . . .

The confirmation hearings on **Richard D. Austin**'s nomination to be head of the General Services Administration have revealed that Austin, as acting director, kept a political appointee he had hired at the request of **Robert Michel**, the House Republican leader, on the payroll from the time the appointee was convicted of bank fraud until he was actually jailed, even giving him a raise during that period. Michel has been the chief sponsor of Austin's nomination. . . .

Evan J. Kemp Jr. is the first person from the ranks of the disabled to be named a member of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. As the new chairman, he will bring first-hand experience with discrimination to the commission's deliberations. After graduating near the top of his class at the University of Virginia Law School in 1954, he was turned down by all 39 law firms he applied to because he was in a wheelchair. Finally, he was able to get a job with the government. . . .

In—*Commerce:* Undersecretary for Technology—**Robert M. White**. *Health and Human Services:* Assistant Secretary for Family Support Administration—**Jo Anne B. Barnhart**. *Labor:* Inspector General—**Julian W. De La Rosa**. *Treasury:* Director, Office of Thrift Supervision—**T. Timothy Ryan Jr.** *Agencies and Commissions:* CIA, General Counsel—**Elizabeth Rindskopf.** Resolution Trust Corporation, Inspector General—**John J. Adair.** Federal Emergency Management Agency, Director—**Wallace Stickney**; Deputy Director—**Jerry Jennings**.

Out—*Health and Human Services:* Acting Assistant Secretary for Family Support Administration—**Eunice S. Thomas**. *Labor:* Acting Inspector General—**Raymond Maria**. *Agencies and Commissions:* CIA, General Counsel—**Russell J. Breummer**. Federal Emergency Management Agency, Director—**Robert H. Morris.**

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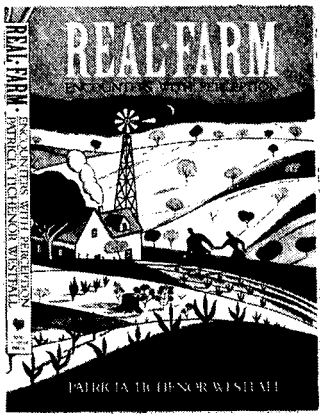

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The Journalist: A Source's Captive or Betrayer?

Janet Malcolm's obsession with psychiatry made her miss the real betrayal in journalism. Too often, reporters cheat their readers by *not* turning on their sources.

by J. Anthony Lukas

Every reader of this magazine who isn't a moron or a pompous ass knows that his literary taste is utterly depraved.

There. Have I got your attention?

A year ago, writing in *The New Yorker*, Janet Malcolm fashioned a lead of comparable authority: "Every journalist who is not too stupid or too full of himself to notice what is going on knows that what he does is morally indefensible."

The ensuing articles were particularly arresting because they purported to be not just another haymaker thrown from the disaffected ranks of Middle America but sophisticated critiques by a practitioner of the very craft under attack.

But a rereading of these articles and a new "afterword," now collected between hard covers,* convinces me that Malcolm is writing from well outside the journalistic tradition—which accounts for both the strengths and weaknesses of this book.

The outsider's perspective enables Malcolm to plumb ironies that might be missed by workaday reporters. And there are some fine glancing insights: "The subject is Scheherazade. He lives in fear of being found uninteresting, and many of the strange things that subjects say to writers—things of almost suicidal rashness—they say out of their desperate need to keep the writer's attention riveted."

But Malcolm is rather like a clever chiropractor examining the practice of medicine. Finally, *The Journalist and the Murderer* is a work of inspired quackery.

Now a disclaimer. Since Malcolm has been widely accused of disguising a secret agenda, let me concede that I have long been a friend of Joe McGinniss, the target of her attack. On the other hand, for nearly 10 years, until he became editor of *The New Yorker*, my book editor was Robert Gottlieb, who is Malcolm's greatest patron and defender. With a foot in each camp, I'll try to walk a straight line.

Just who is this person who claims to have unveiled the dirty little secret of American journalism? She presents herself here as a reporter, explaining, "I have been writing long pieces of reportage for a little over a decade." But there is reason to suspect this appellation. For, as Malcolm herself warns us, "the 'I' character in journalism is almost pure invention." In her case, I think it is.

Malcolm has been a staff writer at *The New Yorker* since 1965, exploring a limited range of subjects—food, Shaker furniture, photography, and psychoanalysis among them. So far as I can determine,

J. Anthony Lukas is the author of Common Ground: A Turbulent Decade in the Lives of Three American Families, *for which he received a Pulitzer Prize in 1988.*

**The Journalist and the Murderer.* Janet Malcolm. *Knopf, $18.95.*

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she has never been on the staff of another publication—since the days that she reviewed for the student paper and helped edit the humor magazine at the University of Michigan. She never went through the apprenticeship—general assignments off a city desk—that has shaped the work habits of so many American reporters of my generation.

To be sure, her work bristles with acute intelligence and a certain showy erudition: Proust and Chekhov, Kokoshka and Gurdjiev, Grandcourt and Osmond, Beethoven bagatelles and Cellini bronzes, Raymond de Saussure and Frieda Fromm-Reichman. But her learning smells of the lamp, of long hours in a *mittel-Europa* study, abstracted from the street and the workplace.

No, it seems to me that the woman who lurks behind the "I" in *The Journalist and the Murderer* is less reporter than analysand.

Seasoned professional

We all know the professional student, the fellow with the green book bag over his shoulder who hangs around a university year after year, accumulating credits and even degrees, unwilling to let go of the academic experience. There is also the professional analysand, the patient who has gone through years of psychotherapy, but who, even after the analysis has been "terminated," can't quite bring himself to let it go. Over and over, in his friendships, his marriage, his professional encounters, he goes on playing out the unresolved themes of his analysis.

Janet Malcolm is the daughter of a psychiatrist. She has undergone analysis. Two of her four books deal with psychoanalysis, and, as I reread them, it struck me that, for her, the relationship between reporter and subject is another version of therapist and patient.

If Malcolm is a professional analysand, she is one who seems to fantasize about reversing roles, about becoming the therapist. In *Psychoanalysis: The Impossible Profession*, she drew a portrait of a pseudonymous analyst she calls "Aaron Green." In her first interview/session with Green, Malcolm detects a curious phenomenon. "He subtly deferred to me, he tried to impress me. He was the patient and I was the doctor; he was the student and I was the teacher. To put it in psychoanalytic language, the transference valence of the journalist was here greater than that of the analyst."

Over and over in *The Journalist and the Murderer*, Malcolm sounds the same equation between subject and patient, e.g.: "The journalistic encounter seems to have the same regressive effect on a subject as the psychoanalytic encounter."

If Malcolm dreams about playing therapist, she often seems to drift into what analysts call "countertransference," the projection onto the patient of characteristics of significant people from the therapist's own past.

Thus, Malcolm's assault on Joe McGinniss for the seduction and betrayal of his subject, Jeffrey MacDonald, struck many people as a reflection of her own concern about similar accusations leveled against her by Jeffrey Masson, the subject of her third book, *In the Freud Archives*. Both Jeffreys sued, claiming that they had been betrayed by the author in question, in MacDonald's case because McGinniss had allegedly misled him about his view of MacDonald's guilt in the murder of his wife and two daughters; in Masson's, because Malcolm allegedly misquoted and doctored material to show Masson, the onetime projects director of the Freud Archives, in a bad light.

When I was the city hall reporter for the *Sun* in Baltimore, the premium was on keeping channels of information open, even at the risk of unseemly coziness with our sources.

What strikes me on this rereading is how Malcolm seems determined to universalize her own shortcomings, turning each into the journalistic equivalent of original sin. The first two McGinniss pieces seemed to be saying something like this: Look, if Masson accuses me of seduction and betrayal, doesn't he realize that's what *all* reporters do, and here's a case far more egregious than mine to illustrate the point.

Then when commentators—notably John Taylor in *New York* magazine—pointed out the parallels of the Masson case (she hadn't mentioned it), Malcolm

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fired back in the afterword, first published in *The New York Review of Books*.

Although she denied that her McGinniss pieces were merely a "thinly veiled account of my own experiences," she also wrote: "The characters of nonfiction, no less than those of fiction, derive from the writer's most idiosyncratic desires and deepest anxieties; they are what the writer wishes he was and worries that he is. *Masson, c'est moi.*"

One waits in vain for the corollary: *McGinniss, c'est moi*. But Malcolm goes on to ridicule her journalistic critics for their thunderous discovery "that I had not 'made up' my story—that is, had not acted in good faith in presenting it as a new story. . . ."

Fools, she seems to be saying, are you so psychoanalytically illiterate that you don't see that all nonfiction writers project their desires and anxieties on their subjects just as we all carry around with us for life the emotional luggage of our infancy?

Malcolm is surely no fool; she knows the weakness of this argument. Indeed, in the first McGinniss piece, she ridiculed the testimony of William Buckley and Joseph Wambaugh about the legitimacy of telling "untruths" to a source. The "debacle" of their testimony, she wrote, "illustrates a truth that many of us learn as children: the invariable inefficacy of the 'Don't blame me—everybody does it' defense." It doesn't work for Malcolm any better than it did for Buckley and Wambaugh.

Even if her famous lead sentence is premeditated hyperbole, it represents a profound misunderstanding of American journalism. The principal failings of the craft are not seduction and betrayal, but laziness and coziness.

Straight from the source's mouth

In the early sixties, when I was the city hall reporter for the *Sun* in Baltimore, all local news ran on the back page. Each morning an assistant city editor would scrawl "city" on column one of the back page dummy and "state" on column eight, signifying that, absent some typhoon or tidal wave, the state house reporter and I were responsible for supplying the day's two major stories.

This meant that, at all costs, we had to cultivate our sources in hopes that a steady stream of zoning board appointments and updates on the tax rate would feed that voracious back page. And that meant that betrayal was the very last impulse we could afford to indulge. For in the rococo corridors of city hall a reputation for betrayal was a sure guarantee that the supply of news would dry up—and with it our professional aspirations.

No, the premium was on keeping those channels of information open, even at the risk of unseemly coziness with our sources. And, notwithstanding the pyrotechnics of Vietnam and Watergate, that, I fear, is still the priority of most American journalism.

If Malcolm's sweeping generalization usually misses the target, it may have a limited application to a tiny swatch of the journalistic battleground: investigative magazine pieces and books, one-time ventures in which the reporter knows he will never have to deal with his source or subject again.

In a fit of frankness, Drew Pearson once commented, "We will give immunity to a very good source as long as the information he offers us is better than what we have on him." If a source is himself so deeply implicated in the story that he threatens to *become* the story, he may be in jeopardy. For some reporters, it comes down to a calculus of whether they have more to gain by cultivating the source or "burning" him. Critics will charge that the reporter has betrayed his source in pursuit of self-interest; the reporter will say he has gone after the more important story. Often the reporter does both.

But in a journalistic sea awash with mindless puffery and boundless gullibility, sharks like these, prowling a roiled but tiny pool, are scarcely representative of the species.

Moving to Malcolm's second universal rule, the tendency of all nonfiction writers to imbue their subjects with their own desires and anxieties, I would concede that some reporters may be inclined to play out their own preoccupations in the dramas they cover. But reporters raised in the discipline of the city desk learn rather early to struggle against that temptation, and they usually prevail.

With the writers of long nonfiction books, the struggle is a bit harder. The process of writing a *Best and the Brightest* or a *Bright Shining Lie* is so consuming that, not surprisingly, the author is tempted to color his protagonists with some of his own obsessions. But, again, the best of our non- fiction writers struggle to separate the interior and exterior worlds.

Not only does Malcolm almost willfully refuse to distinguish these realms, but she displays a lofty, indeed elitist, disdain for the plodding reporters who do. Joe Keeler, a reporter for *Newsday* who covered the MacDonald case, is characterized as "the unsubtle Keeler," with his "prepared questions and his newspaper-reporter's directness," and Malcolm doubts that his straightforward approach would draw from his subjects "the kind of authentic responses that I try to elicit from mine with a more Japanese technique."

Keeler is treated kindly in comparison to Joseph Wambaugh, the kind of blunt nonfiction writer Malcolm clearly regards as a vulgarian ("I'm not an in-

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tellectual," she elicits from him with her sushi-slicing technique, "I write from the guts"). His prose style is described as "like that of the charmless writing in small print on a baggage-claim check."

Malcolm's distance from the constraints of normal journalistic practice is most evident in her statement that McGinniss's decision to halt their projected series of interviews "freed me from the guilt" she might have felt for what she was about to do to him.

Step into my parlor . . .

Most reporters know the hot pulse of anger when somebody refuses to talk with you. Don't they know who I am, you say? I'll show them. You go to bed determined to wreak vengeance. But, most of the time, you wake the next morning and say: Nah, it's not worth it. If the impulse survives the night, then your editor is bound to remind you that people have a right not to talk with you and a professional doesn't punish them for it. Indeed, at every journalistic institution where I have worked, the tradition—not always lived up to—was that you leaned over backwards to be fair to the people who wouldn't talk to you, for fear that you could be accused of exactly what Malcolm now proudly admits. Since she was published by one of her best friends and edited by her husband, she wasn't restrained as she might have been by a less collaborative hand.

If Malcolm's sweeping generalization misses the target, it may have a limited application: to one-time ventures in which the reporter knows he will never have to deal with his source or subject again.

(Malcolm's pique at McGinniss's failure to continue their talks is all the more peculiar because she is not renowned for openness herself. By all reports, she does not give interviews. And when a fact-checker from this magazine called to ask whether her father was an "analyst," she said, "That's not true," neglecting to add that his job description, "psychiatrist," was one that most laymen would be hard-pressed to distinguish from "analyst," and one indeed that many analysts share.)

For just one moment, let us consider the McGinniss matter drained of the punitive spirit Malcolm brings to her task.

At Jeffrey MacDonald's explicit invitation, McGinniss entered into a contract to tell the truth about the case and to divide the proceeds of the resulting book, with MacDonald's share earmarked to pay his huge defense costs. McGinniss has been criticized for so-called "checkbook journalism," but I'm not sure that I find anything inherently wrong with such a deal.

Imagine if you will the hypothetical, but not unrealistic, case of a reporter who writes a book about a black man accused of raping a white woman during the civil rights struggle. If the reporter believed the man was unjustly accused, how many of us would condemn him for sharing the book's proceeds with the defendant in order to pay court costs? If one believed that Jeffrey MacDonald was innocent—as Joe McGinniss plainly did when he entered into the deal—is this instance so terribly different?

But if McGinniss subsequently discovered that, despite his contract to tell the truth, MacDonald had systematically lied to him and indeed cynically used him to spread a false version of the events, then who has seduced and betrayed whom?

The answer, I suggest, hinges on whether you think MacDonald lied to McGinniss and thus on whether you believe that he was guilty of murdering his wife and children or not. But curiously, although she slyly hints that she has doubts about his guilt, Malcolm explicitly refuses to make the hard march through the evidence in which the answer ultimately may lie.

MacDonald sends her mounds of such material—"trial transcripts, motions, declarations, affidavits, reports." Malcolm can't read such stuff. She sees words like "'bloody syringe,' 'blue threads,' 'left chest puncture,' 'unidentified fingerprints,' 'Kimberly's urine,'" and she adds the document to the unread pile. "I know I cannot learn anything about MacDonald's guilt or innocence from this material."

Slogging through this gritty minutiae is all right for cloddish reporters like Keeler and McGinniss—and the judge, attorneys and jurors in the trial that found MacDonald guilty—but not for a woman of letters like Malcolm, adept at intuiting the inner life of her subjects.

Once McGinniss became convinced that MacDonald had both murdered his wife and children and lied

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to him about it, he confronted a difficult dilemma: how to hold his subject's confidence long enough for him to complete the research.

Some have argued with Malcolm that McGinniss simply made a self-interested calculation that he had more to gain by deceiving MacDonald than by "keeping faith" with him (which, in this case, I suppose would have meant informing him rather early on that he believed him to be guilty).

Knowing, liking, and respecting Joe McGinniss as I do, I regard his quandary as much more complicated: Whether MacDonald's betrayal in effect abrogated the spirit of their agreement, or whether he was still bound by some sort of obligation to his faithless "partner," and if so, what it was. Each of us would parse that problem differently.

I don't always recognize my friend in some of the supportive letters he wrote MacDonald, even as his views were shifting. I don't believe he had an obligation to inform MacDonald that he believed him guilty, but he might have been less ebullient in his letters of reassurance. McGinniss's mistake, I think, was in ever allowing himself to be drawn into a "friendship" with his subject, even when he still believed MacDonald to be innocent and saw him as under siege. Had he established a more detached stance from the beginning, he would never have had to worry about MacDonald discerning a shift in tone.

But what we are talking about here, I think, is not a defect in character but a matter of judgment. Whatever you believe McGinniss's mistakes to be, can they possibly justify Malcolm's scorched-earth expedition?

If she often reveals a fundamental misunderstanding of the reporter's craft, Malcolm has nonetheless written a quirky, provocative outsider's book. Even when her grandiloquent airs drive one to distraction, Malcolm's sheer intelligence makes her worth attending to. Her ruminations about the reporter-subject relationship are well-timed, because they coincide with some self-criticism from within the craft about the reigning orthodoxy of nonfiction, the third-person narrative in vogue ever since John Hersey's *Hiroshima* and Capote's *In Cold Blood*.

We are witnessing an interesting return to the first person—in autobiography, memoir, travel writing, and much other nonfiction. This reflects, in part, a suspicion that the third person disguises too many hidden sources and secret agendas. The first person appeals to some because it seems to promise greater frankness and authenticity. But, bearing in mind the memoirs of certain generals and politicians, a friend of mine warns, "The greatest lies are told in the confessional." Malcolm's book may be another case in point. □

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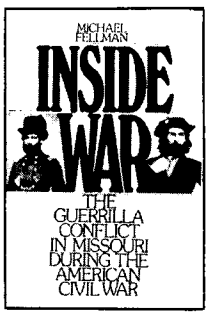

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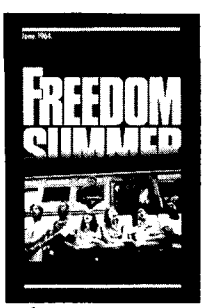

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The Worst City Government

Recently, Atlantic City popped its cork for the opening of Donald Trump's billion-dollar Taj Mahal casino, where the "Michelangelo Suite" goes for $10,000 a night and the tables promise million-dollar jackpots. But just a few blocks away, New Jersey state investigators are examining a different kind of payoff. In January, Atlantic City's mayor, James L. Usry, and 13 political associates were indicted on bribery and corruption charges in a scheme the U.S. attorney termed "a government for sale."

The eight-month investigation by state police netted more than just the popular Republican mayor. Also under indictment for bribery, conspiracy, influence peddling, and official misconduct are the president of the city council, two council members, and the commissioner of the city zoning board. Court papers allege that for the relatively low stakes of $60,000, an undercover informant received zoning variances, airport concessions, rent-control exceptions, and a lucrative electric-cart franchise on the boardwalk. Today, Mayor Usry, former president of the National Conference of Black Mayors, is busy raising campaign cash and blithely predicting a November reelection—a self-confidence understandable only in context. Scandal is routine in Atlantic City, where four of the last six mayors have been indicted for corruption.

Before the legalization of gambling, Atlantic City's main attractions were nostalgic ones: Miss America pageants, big bands, and saltwater taffy. Today, 30 million tourists decamp at the casinos every year, dropping $60 million into city coffers annually, and making Atlantic City the top tourist draw in the country. But the profits haven't trickled down to the 36,000 residents left behind when the tour buses roll out of town. During the eighties, the city's violent crime tripled, despite a population plunge of 15 percent. These days, one-half of the city's population receives public assistance, and despite a labor shortage, people continue to leave. The city has 12 gambling palaces but only one full-service supermarket. All 18 local movie theaters have closed. Last summer, *Money* magazine crowned the resort town "the most unlivable city in America."

When the Casino Control Act legalized gambling in 1977, Atlantic City officials hyped gaming as "a unique tool of urban redevelopment." But after 13 years of crap games and municipal corruption, the promise has tapped out. "Atlantic City used to be a dump," an industry analyst recently explained to the *Los Angeles Times*. "Now it's a dump with casinos."

—*Katherine Boo*

On April 6, D.C. Mayor Marion Barry was celebrating. "This is my 76th day of being clean of any chemical," Barry announced. Things haven't been looking quite as rosy for the rest of the District, however. An update:

➤Not everyone is enthusiastic about the mayor's attempt at a comeback. Many city workers have complained of pressure from their superiors to contribute to Barry's legal defense fund.

➤Last March, Diane Evans awoke to find her year-old daughter blue from lack of oxygen. She called 911. "The guy kept reassuring me that an ambulance was on its way," she said. But the ambulance never came. The child's father ended up driving her to the hospital where she was successfully treated. How could such a thing happen? A related incident offers a clue. Wayne Paxton, a D.C. paramedic, is alleged to have turned in fake time sheets totaling $18,000.

➤Last year, D.C. public schools had an average of 45 fire code violations including blocked or missing fire doors, empty fire extinguishers, broken alarms, and painted-over smoke detectors.

➤When members of the D.C. Department of Human Services recommended that a company called JMC be dropped because of poor performance and high costs, then-director David Rivers reassured his friend John Clyburn, a JMC advisor, that he was "keeping a lid on" the complaints. JMC is one of three companies owned by friends of Clyburn that, together with Clyburn's own company, have received over $2 million worth of contracts from the department. JMC actually did not exist, except on paper, until it received its first contract from the city for $216,000. The complaints began when JMC requested an 18 percent funding increase after having taken five months to deliver any services. Rivers and Clyburn, both friends of the mayor, are currently on trial for bribery and conspiracy.

➤On April Fools' Day, members of the District's city council got a salary hike from $69,500 to $71,885 a year. They say it was an accident, but even at the old salary they were receiving more than other big-city councils. In New York City the annual salary is $45,000. Chicago aldermen pull down a mere $27,600 a year. In nearby Baltimore, it's $24,500. D.C. council members are getting nearly triple that for a part-time job.

—*Daniel Kaufman*

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Why Helms is Still at the Helm

North Carolina politics illustrates an important national moral: Republicans don't have to address the social and economic concerns of ordinary people in order to win elections. Democrats do.

by Barry Yeoman

Five years ago, in the aftermath of the biggest GOP sweep North Carolina had ever seen, a group of stunned Democratic Party leaders paid for a mammoth public-opinion poll to find out what went wrong. Pollster William Hamilton surveyed 10,000 North Carolinians—and found a surprisingly wide streak of economic populism.

By a two-to-one margin, North Carolinians wanted to abolish the state's sales tax on groceries, a regressive tax first imposed in 1961 to benefit the state's public schools. They also opposed efforts by the textile and furniture industries to repeal a state tax on business inventories. Taken together, the poll's findings suggested that North Carolinians supported an economic strategy that lowered taxes for average citizens while maintaining taxes for corporations.

So what did the Democrats in the state legislature do the next year? They *raised* the sales tax on food, while *lowering* the inventory tax.

On the face of it, that legislative course makes no sense at all. But in *Tar Heel Politics: Myths and Realities*,* sociologist Paul Luebke argues that, regrettably, the Democrats' regressive tax agenda is completely in line with the party's philosophy, particularly in the South.

Barry Yeoman is the associate editor of the Independent Weekly *in Durham, North Carolina.*

* *Tar Heel Politics: Myths and Realities.* Paul Luebke. *The University of North Carolina Press, $24.95/$10.95.*

In this first major rethinking of North Carolina politics since 1949, when V.O. Key called the state a "progressive plutocracy," Luebke creates a political model that holds not only in his home state but throughout much of the nation. He discards the "conservative" and "liberal" labels and substitutes the more appropriate "traditionalist" and "modernizer," which describe the two strains of politicians who dominate North Carolina and most of the South today.

Southern discomforts

Traditionalist politicians, such as Republican Jesse Helms, draw their philosophy from Protestant fundamentalism and rural values. They don't oppose all economic change, but they prefer "changes that allow the social relations to continue." Traditionalists support such low-wage industries as textile and furniture manufacturing and are uncomfortable with high-technology industries that could bring in outsiders and drive up the wage scale. But what gives traditionalists their base of support is not economics; it's their adamant stand against efforts to alter the social order. Some of the issues they raise—crime, union corruption, the morality of abortion—resonate even with traditionally liberal voters.

For example, Luebke describes a $7.50-a-plate "rubber chicken" dinner for middle-class Helms sup-

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The Democrats' modernizer philosophy is precisely why they lose. Modernizers are willing to grant legal equality to blacks and women because it helps ensure a dynamic business climate, but they are not fundamentally committed to economic fairness.

porters in the textile-and-tobacco town of Henderson. The evening begins with an invocation, the national anthem, and the Pledge of Allegiance—and then Helms launches into his attack on the groups that would disrupt the status quo: "Every pressure group known to man is converging on North Carolina, and they're forthright in saying that their number-one goal is to eliminate me from the Senate. . . . It's the homosexuals, labor unions, those militant feminists, all of them." Helms warned that Jesse Jackson had come into the state "to register, I-forget-what-it-was, 200,000 or 300,000 blacks for the sole purpose of defeating Jesse Helms."

Death and Taxes

By contrast, modernizers believe in economic expansion, even if it means disrupting the social order. They believe the government has a role in providing roads, schools, and water and sewer systems in order to lure industry. During his 1984 race against Jesse Helms, former Governor Jim Hunt, the quintessential modernizer, drew most of his business support from the state's growth-oriented sectors: bankers, real-estate developers, and executives of multinational corporations.

Modernizers are willing to grant legal equality to blacks and women because it helps ensure a dynamic business climate. But Luebke explains that modernizers are not fundamentally committed to economic fairness. If they believe a certain investment will improve the business climate and help most citizens, they will make it—even if the extra tax burden falls mainly on poor and middle-income people. Only in the most dire circumstances did the Democratic North Carolina legislature raise the corporate income tax three years ago—and it was the first increase in 54 years.

The point of all this, writes Luebke, is that the Democrats' modernizer philosophy is precisely why they lose. For example, even when Jim Hunt began losing his wide lead in the 1984 Senate race, he refused to talk about the populist economic issues that could have won him the election—issues such as tax fairness, health insurance, and low manufacturing wages. Instead, he announced on the campaign trail that he supported school prayer, the death penalty, and the Reagan military buildup. To prove he was a man of conservative principles, he refused to commute the death sentence of Velma Barfield, the first woman to be executed in North Carolina in 40 years.

"If Hunt conceded economics, then the spotlight would be placed on abortion, the King holiday, communism, or school prayer, the kinds of issues on which Helms loved to run," writes Luebke. By trying to out-Helms Helms on certain issues, all Hunt did was lose the enthusiasm of the blacks and liberal whites who made up the core of his party's campaign workers.

There is a lesson in this, not just for North Carolina Democrats but for national Democrats as well. If Michael Dukakis had paid attention to economic-fairness issues during most of his presidential campaign, as he did in the final few weeks, he might be president today. Indeed, Dukakis's early campaign bore a striking resemblance to Hunt's "4 E's" theme—economy, education, elderly, and environment—a vague group of issues that could have been espoused by any politician in America regardless of ideology.

Fortunately, some Democrats are beginning to listen. The Democrats competing for the nomination to challenge Helms this year have run more populist campaigns than have Democrats in recent years, raising issues such as health insurance, job security, and home ownership.

Bill Bradley, Mario Cuomo, and Sam Nunn, take note: George Bush blends modernizer and traditionalist features in a very appealing way. Democratic presidential candidates must break out of their straight modernizer mold, recognize the legitimate social concerns raised by conservatives, and take on the economic issues confronting ordinary people. □

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Snob Rule

H.L. Mencken thought Nietzsche was peachy, but he didn't like very much else—including democracy

By Nicholas Lemann

The main impression that arises from H. L. Mencken's diaries is of the unlikelihood of their author as the leading American writer of his day. He was a man with no sympathy whatever for the national enterprise; in one typically dolorous entry, he says, "My grandfather, I believe, made a mistake when he came to this country. . . . I have spent all of my 62 years here, but I still find it impossible to fit myself into the accepted patterns of American life and thought. After all these years, I remain a foreigner." He was not a creature of the literary or journalistic demimonde either. His closest friends were solid, prosperous burghers: professors at the Johns Hopkins Medical School, executives of the Baltimore Sunpapers, and, in New York, the publishers Alfred and Blanche Knopf rather than his fellow writers. His idea of a good time is conveyed by a passage written after the death of his friend Max Brodel, a medical illustrator and a fellow member of the Saturday Night Club, which was the locus of Mencken's weekend entertainment for many years:

> It has been the custom of the club since the beginning to end every evening of music with a waltz, and usually it has been one of Strauss's, though the library also contains many by Waldteufel, Gungl, Komzak and Niehrer. Max always welcomed this postlude. "I begin to feel beerish," he would say—and the moment the piano lid banged down we'd be off to the beer table. No members of the club ate and drank more heartily. He was, in fact, a really gargantuan eater . . . .

Nicholas Lemann, a contributing editor of The Washington Monthly, *is a national correspondent of* The Atlantic.

**The Diary of H.L. Mencken.* Charles A. Fecher, ed. *Knopf, $30.00.*

Maryland is for crabs

Although Mencken was, unlike anyone who's around today, enormously influential as both a political commentator and a literary critic, he conveys in the diary no sense of real engagement with either field. For all of his adult life he disapproved of the basic condition of American politics, and the figure he disapproved of most of all was Franklin Roosevelt ("a fraud from snout to tail"); to the extent that he found any politicians tolerable, they were conservative Republicans like Robert Taft and Joseph Ritchie, the governor of Maryland, whose following among intellectuals was probably limited to Mencken.

In the final phase of his career, the only political cause that truly interested him—opposition to American involvement in World War II—was one he felt (probably rightly) that he couldn't get away with writing about, so the particulars of his views about it remain a mystery. Anyway, it's hard to imagine that if he had set down his case against the war, it would

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seem anything but embarrassingly wrongheaded today. There is not a hint in the diary that Mencken perceived Adolf Hitler as either dangerous or evil. In general, very oddly for a journalist, Mencken had no interest in the idea of the nobility of a writer's participation in public life. In one entry he says proudly about his writing, "It is free of moral purpose"; in another, "The one obligation I recognize in this world is my duty to my immediate family."

Burgher king

During the years before 1930, when the diary begins, Mencken championed the work of many of the great writers of his day, such as Eugene O'Neill, Theodore Dreiser, Sinclair Lewis, Willa Cather, and Scott Fitzgerald. By the time of the diary, though, Mencken had stopped writing literary criticism, and almost all of the literary commentary in the diary has to do with how pathetic his writer-friends (including all of the above and, especially, the now long-forgotten Joseph Hergesheimer) had become, thanks to alcoholism, financial imprudence, and physical infirmity. He doesn't seem to be reading new books; there is only one entry in which he praises other writers' work, and even in that case he is quick to denigrate the authors of the two books he admires: Will Durant (*Caesar and Christ*) for being "only a popularizer, and full of unwarranted pretensions," and John Gunther (*Inside Asia*) for being "in general . . . a third-rater." A typical willfully nonliterary passage on another writer is this account of a meeting with T.S. Eliot:

> An amiable fellow, but with little to say. He told me that his father was a brick manufacturer in Missouri. No talk of religion. We discussed magazine prices. He charged 7/6 a copy for the *Criterion*. He believes that J.C. Squire's effort to increase the circulation of the *London Mercury* by reducing its price from 2/6 to 1s. a copy has been a failure. I drank a quart of home-brew beer, and Eliot got down two scotches. A dull evening.

The diary's much-discussed anti-semitism, rather than seeming out of character, is entirely of a piece with its picture of Mencken as an anti-New Deal conservative lunching comfortably at the Maryland Club. There are two broad varieties of anti-semitism: the kind animated by the idea that there is a Jewish conspiracy to ruin the world, and the country-club kind, in which Jews are seen as "pushy" and otherwise socially distasteful. Mencken subscribed to the latter view, as no doubt did most of his friends. The apparent paradox of his many business and social associations with Jews can be explained in part by pointing out that most of his Jewish friends were of German rather than Eastern European origin and probably shared some of his distaste for the Jewish immigrants of the 1880-1920 period. For example, he reported that Alfred Knopf (who was Jewish) was considering moving his publishing company from Manhattan to the suburbs because "He realizes himself that there are now too many Jews in his office. Once he gets to Westchester County he should be able to find supplies of labor of a more desirable sort."

If Mencken was not, attitudinally, an ordinary querulous old Republican, there is nothing in the diary to prove it. The one government agency for which he had kind words was the Navy, because of its gentlemanly cast. He was dead set against all aspects of modernity: sound in motion pictures, automobiles, labor unions, air conditioning, airplanes, bureaucracy, psychology, radio, television. He was convinced that the world was getting steadily worse in every way, and he made no exception to the rule for himself. He was profoundly hypochondriacal, and pleased that he had fathered no children who might have to endure the horrors of the future. The three institutions he cared about most—the Sunpapers, the Hopkins medical school, and the Knopf publishing house—were all, to his mind, in a state of alarming decline. The one blessing of the stroke that tragically ended his ability to work in 1948 was that it may have partially shielded him from postwar America, which he surely would have despised even more than the periods he was able to write about.

A writer's writer

Why, then, was (and is) Mencken so much admired by other writers? Walter Lippmann called him "the most powerful personal influence on this whole generation of educated people." Edmund Wilson harbored some doubts about Mencken but wrote him admiring letters even during his communist phase in the thirties. The diary has been much defended this year. What is the source of his appeal?

Mencken was extremely dedicated to his craft, and, unlike all the contemporaries he disapproved of, he makes a good role model of literary constancy. He had a Germanic devotion to *arbeit*, as well as to music and beer. In his prime, he wrote 14 hours a day, 6 days a week. Even in his mid-sixties he turned out a book a year. Near his 65th birthday, he wrote, "Looking back over a life of hard work, I find that my only regret is that I didn't work even harder." He was entirely indifferent to money and fame, those corrupters of so many American writers, and absolutely untouched by the desire to curry favor through his writ-

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ing. He was so self-motivated that he turned out a memoir of his early career more than 3,000 typed pages long that he had no intention of publishing because it was even more frank than the three volumes of memoirs he did publish. The prose style of the diary, initially off-putting because it is so plain compared to that of his work for publication, is winning in the long run because it is so consistently impeccable and graceful; in fact, the diaries might make a better stylistic monument than his bombastic essays, which, read today, carry a hint of the artificial voice of a 19th-century medicine-show barker.

Mencken considered the great mass of people to be inherently inferior; any society controlled by them was bound to be second-rate, and there was no better example than the United States.

Personally, Mencken was a man of great decency. The diary records the maintenance of many friendships, some of them dating back to earliest boyhood; most of the entries mention a lengthy "gabble" or "palaver" with this or that old-timer. He lived modestly in the house where he grew up. He did many favors for people who were in no position to repay them. He regularly visited an old uncle in a rest home, and offered to pay for his care. He answered thousands of letters from people he didn't know, usually on the day he received them. He was adamantly and admirably rooted in his hometown of Baltimore. He was an uxorious husband.

But these virtues cannot by themselves account for the magnitude of Mencken's reputation. Part of the rest of the explanation is that he helped to invent the concept of the independent intellectual in this country. Before Mencken, most leading critics of American life and letters were stuffy academics; Mencken himself, self-taught, self-employed, entertaining, and popular, demonstrated to younger writers like Wilson that they need not become professors. The heyday of the American intellectual, which ran roughly from World War I through the 1960s (when intellectual life outside the universities began to disappear again), was at least arguably ushered in by Mencken.

Eggheads and yokels

It is impossible, though, to dismiss the suspicion that there is a darker side to the cult of Mencken—that the real common ground between him and the intellectuals was an antidemocratic spirit. It is no secret that Mencken disliked democracy. One of his books, *Notes on Democracy*, makes his feelings about it perfectly clear, and in many other published works he makes no effort to disguise his preference for a precapitalist aristocracy as the ideal form of social and governmental authority. The fundamental reason for this conviction was that Mencken considered the great mass of people to be inherently inferior; any society controlled by them was bound to be second-rate, and there was no better example than the United States.

Mencken was full of ethnic prejudices—it's surprising that the anti-semitism of the diary made news, because his oeuvre is full of anti-semitic statements; in 1922 he characterized the pogrom-fleeing immigrants from Eastern Europe as "Jews too incompetent to swindle even the barbarous peasants of Russia, Poland, and Rumania"—but he also despised ordinary native-born Americans. By far the most vituperative passages in the diary are directed at the general run of "yokels," "boobs," "morons," and "imbeciles," and, in particular, at the migrants from Appalachia to Baltimore Mencken charmingly referred to as "lintheads," "anthropoids," or "vermin." When FDR died, Mencken noted the occasion in his diary by saying, "He was the first American to penetrate to the real depths of vulgar stupidity. He never made the mistake of overestimating the intelligence of the American mob."

It is difficult to see what principled defense there would be today for Mencken's core beliefs; indeed, the political triumph of conservatism in the 1980s was based on its shedding its elitist tradition and embracing populism. (The chief contemporary organ of Mencken-worship, *The American Spectator*, doesn't have the nerve to engage in true Menckenism, which would surely today include a hatred of Ronald Reagan, who is exactly the kind of hearty, positive-thinking, nonintellectual public figure that Mencken most disliked.) As a general principle, democracy has had a pretty good run over the past half-century; it would be impossible to claim that it had been discredited in any way. Hitler, among others, made it permanently impossible for ethnic put-downs to seem lighthearted and funny, as they must have in Mencken's heyday. Intellectually, Mencken belonged to a tradition of complete uninterest in common people (his idol was

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Friedrich Nietzsche, and he considered Don Quixote "almost unreadable") that seems to have come to a dead end.

What is easy to see, however, is how neatly Mencken's writing during his great decade, the twenties, fit into the belief-system of most American intellectuals, even though they were miles to the left of Mencken politically. Mencken had three great gripes then, all of which most intellectuals would have heartily agreed with: American involvement in World War I, Prohibition, and the booster culture that produced President Warren G. Harding. In all three cases, it is possible to see the real source of Mencken's views as simply his primary loyalty to Germany and German culture—that would explain his feelings about the World War I (and World War II, for that matter), the civilizing effects of liquor, and the anti-intellectualism of American life. Most other intellectuals didn't share Mencken's feelings about Germany, but they identified the war, Prohibition, and Harding with the dominance of a bland, conservative, business-oriented ethos from which they felt excluded. All of the books that formed the foundation of the intellectual "opposition culture"—Randolph Bourne's *War and the Intellectuals* (the war was a munitions-industry plot), Harold Stearns's *Civilization in America* (there isn't any), and Sinclair Lewis's *Babbit* (businessmen are idiots) were entirely consistent with Menckenism. Mencken's relative silence on political matters after 1930 helped obscure how far apart he and most other intellectuals really were.

When FDR died, Mencken noted the occasion in his diary by saying, "He was the first American to penetrate to the real depths of vulgar stupidity."

Snob story

Specific issues aside, Mencken's antidemocratic beliefs were always hard to miss, but antidemocracy has always been the secret vice of the intellectuals. As far back as the 1840s, Washington Irving was explaining his expatriation to England by saying that, while America had "the sublime and beautiful of natural scenery," only Europe possessed "the refinements of highly cultivated society." By the 1920s, by intellectuals' lights, this country had lost its sublimeness, but remained a howling wilderness as far as culture was concerned. In Western Europe, scholars and artists were godlike figures, celebrated by their whole societies; in America, they were outcasts. The national tone seemed to have been set by the Elks Club. Mencken's diatribes against the numbing flood of nationalistic PR were received by other writers as courageous and thrilling. His pummeling of the unappreciative masses was obviously also pleasing to intellectuals—and it still is. Just a couple of months ago, an A-list of American writers (Auchincloss, Ellison, Galbraith, Hersey, Mailer, Miller, Schlesinger, Styron, Vonnegut) defended the Mencken diary in a letter to *The New York Review of Books* by pointing out that in addition to being anti-semitic and anti-black, "It also contains discourteous remarks about most races, nationalities, and professions; in fact, Mencken's harshest words are directed at 'the only pure Anglo-Saxons left in the United States . . . a wretchedly dirty, shiftless, stupid, and rascally people.' " It's amazing that at this late date intellectuals are willing to renounce racism but not snobbery, which is their hidden link to Mencken; but that is where we still are.

To put the best face on it, American intellectuals' misgivings about the American people might turn out to be an artifact—one of the last remaining—of our country's youth. Historically, snobbery was a way for American writers to establish their bona fides with their superiors in Europe, by demonstrating that they shared the European conviction that the United States was uncivilized. Even in the twenties, Mencken was able, without fear of appearing ridiculous, to portray this country as being clearly a province of Europe in such areas as science, medicine, painting, law, literature, criticism, philosophy, music, diplomacy, politics, and finance: "Everything American is a bit amateurish and childish . . . . The most conspicuous and respected American in nearly every field of endeavor, saving only the purely commercial . . . is a man who would attract little attention in any other country."

For intellectuals who felt ashamed about this state of affairs, the booboisie served as a kind of excuse, as well as a justification for feelings of superiority. But now this country has been a leader in all the fields Mencken mentioned for at least a generation, so the need for an excuse no longer exists. One of the

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ironies of the American cultural ascent, when it's considered in the light of Mencken's writing, is that it was accomplished in large part precisely because we aren't the kind of aristocratic society he liked. Relatively few of the people who have led this country to cultural leadership emerged from the privileged classes. Mencken himself, who never went to college and who rose to prominence on the basis of his appeal to a popular audience, probably would not have become a great figure if his family had remained in Germany, as he wished.

Now that American intellectuals no longer need an explanation for their country's cultural shortcomings, all that remains as an impetus to put down the common people is the need to feel superior, and that is a base motive that thinking people ought to rid themselves of. Mencken was probably right in believing that intellectuals will never be as celebrated in the United States as they were in Goethe's Germany, but that doesn't constitute a license to sneer. Sneering actually works to the detriment of most intellectuals' political goals because it has helped convince most Americans that liberals are elitists not to be trusted. Right now intellectuals have a big opportunity to help redefine American culture: the collapse of communism will inevitably lead to a period of intense reexamination of our national purpose. It's time for them finally to come to terms with the life of the country.

Mencken fans might argue that a dose of the old man's medicine is needed now more than ever, because a wave of obnoxious self-satisfaction always follows the winning of a war, even a cold one. They'd be only half right: that danger exists, but it can be headed off without resorting to booboisie-bashing. There is a long and noble tradition in this country of comically deflating official pomposities and pieties without at the same time condemning most Americans as fools. Mark Twain did it in *Huckleberry Finn*, and so did the frontier humorists who were his precursors. More recently, the movies and television provide a wealth of examples, from the Marx Brothers to the very funny and subversive new prime-time cartoon show, "The Simpsons." Intellectuals now could play an important part in redirecting the country's concern to problems like economic stagnation and ghetto poverty, on whose solution the future of the United States rests. Were Mencken alive today, he would point out that the creed that has swept over the world is nothing more than a mass desire to eat McDonald's hamburgers at shopping malls. In that sense he provides a wonderful guidepost for intellectuals: Think of what he would say, let it crystallize in your mind, and then be sure not to say it yourself. □

THE WASHINGTON MONTHLY

Journalism Award

for February 1990 is presented to

Dale Keiger
Cincinnati

When does a newspaper almost completely ignore a colossal financial scandal? When one of the principals is the newspaper's CEO and another is his brother. Keiger's piece documents how *The Cincinnati Enquirer* downplayed the Lincoln Savings & Loan scandal involving Charles Keating and his brother, Bill Keating, chairman of the *Enquirer* (and of the Associated Press). When, in connection with the scandal, the government sued the two Keatings in their capacities as directors of Lincoln's parent company, the paper ran the news on page 4 of section C. The business editor who had pressed for a stronger story was fired for not being a "team player." George Blake, editor of the *Enquirer*, explained his paper's virtual silence this way: "We don't consider this a local story. It's an Arizona story." Keiger rebuts Blake with the observation that Lincoln's demise will cost Cincinnatians from $17 million to $30 million.

The Monthly Journalism Award is presented each month to the best newspaper, magazine, television, or radio story (or series of stories) on our political system. Nominations for any newspaper, magazine, or radio or television station in the country are welcome. The subject can be government in its federal, state, or municipal manifestation. Please send nominations to Monthly Journalism Award, 1611 Connecticut Ave. NW, Washington, D.C. 20009. Two copies of the article or broadcast text should accompany the nomination.

The award for stories published or aired in March will be announced in the June issue. Nominations for stories published or aired in April will close May 15. The winner will be announced in the July/August issue.

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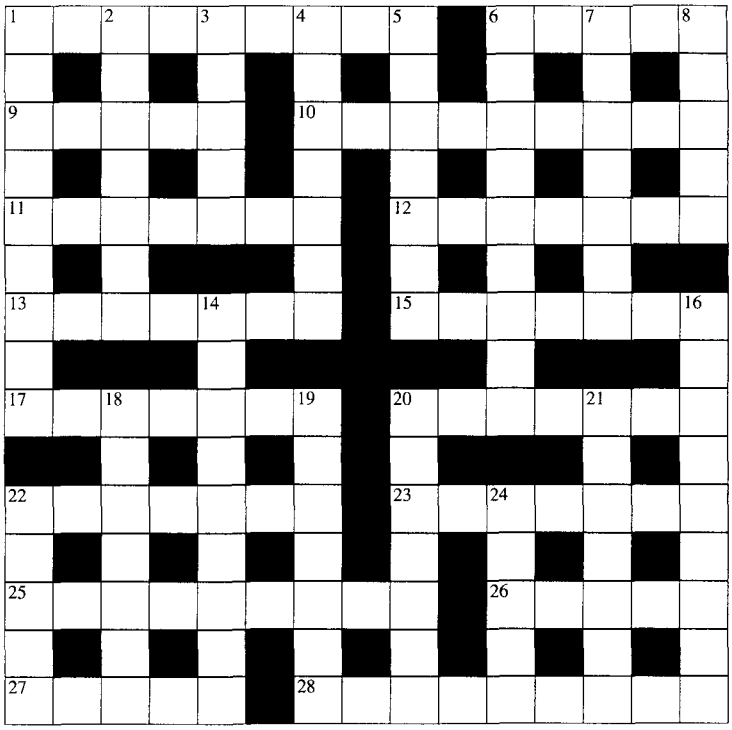
POLITICAL PUZZLE

by John Barclay

The numbers indicate the number of letters and words, e.g. (2,3) means a two-letter word followed by a three-letter word. Groups of letters, e.g. USA, are treated as one word.



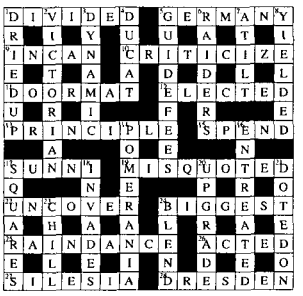
ACROSS

1. Leading Russian composer wandering around grove? Just the opposite! (9)
6. Eternal triangle—arranged date around end of April. (5)
9. Dump her in river forming border at times. (5)
10. Representatives steal edge in a devious manner. (9)
11. Former president's wife is one large pain? (7)
12. Hail one confused behind the eight ball. (2,1,4)
13. News source rinsed, scrubbed after one. (7)
15. Mets' run disfigured part of body. (7)
17. Clearly a mistake for young lady to take lapdog back. (7)
20. Stand up deliberately for household helper. (7)
22. Prophet about friend in Bordeaux is more sordid. (7)
23. Kid or returning in color. (3,4)
25. Comes without plan and taps phone illegally. (7,2)
26. Oversize letter from Greece returned in bad job. (5)
27. Trust unreasonably a particular airframe feature. (5)
28. Haitian struggling with central rule is problem for 1 Across. (9)

DOWN

1. Element thrown out in rummage. (9)
2. Improperly airs elected officials' choice of snack. (7)
3. Where conflict develops is a near thing. (5)
4. Joe Montana sometimes hurdled for a change. (7)
5. 6 and 51 North in this country is focal point in 28 Across. (7)
6. Spoilers manufactured sad edgers. (9)
7. Disappointment is rarely not lewd. (7)
8. Way to walk is statement of intention, we hear. (5)
14. Time trend developed into handicap. (9)
16. Love tennis games in Massachusetts or other state. (9)
18. Make her pars more elegant. (7)
19. Displayed endless pleasure for examination. (7)
20. Tiger home badly rotted with one inside. (7)
21. Simple farmer manufactured own lamp. (7)
22. London and New York areas look the same on return. (5)
24. Joan is upset with university in western France. (5)

Answers to last month's puzzle:



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POLITICAL BOOKNOTES

Public affairs books scheduled to be published this month.

Ninth Justice: The Fight for Bork. Patrick B. McGuigan, Dawn M. Weyrich. *University Press of America, $21.95.* More than two years after Robert Bork's nomination to the Supreme Court generated a war of position papers and press releases between liberals and conservatives, these groups are battling each other in books over the meaning of Bork's failed confirmation. McGuigan and Weyrich tell the story from the perspective of an "outside," far-right, special-interest group, the Free Congress Foundation.

The purpose of the book, according to McGuigan, is threefold: to provide a chronological narrative of the confirmation battle; to provide a glimpse of McGuigan's personal recollections from the hectic four-month period surrounding the nomination; and to instruct fellow conservatives on how to confirm future nominees.

The authors keep their promises, but deliver a narrative that ranges from uninspiring (the chronology) to cliched (McGuigan's personal anecdotes) to hysterical and vengeful (the guidelines on future nominees).

In order to assemble the Bork nomination chronology, which starts in late June 1987 with the retirement of Justice Lewis Powell and concludes in late October with the Senate's 58-42 vote rejecting Bork, it appears that the authors simply summarized articles appearing in various newspapers and magazines. Although this approach allows the reader to track developments during the confirmation struggle—which is helpful in certain areas, such as Senator Joseph Biden's retreat from pro-Bork statements—it also results in a rather flat narrative.

Perhaps revealing McGuigan's personal experiences and emotions during this period is supposed to spice things up. McGuigan argues that a slick leftist smear campaign and the Reagan administration's anemic defense of Bork together doomed the nominee. Indeed, McGuigan concludes that administration officials avoided fighting for Bork until it was too late. He castigates Howard Baker, the White House chief of staff, and administration lobbyist William Ball.

At other points in his account McGuigan offers anecdotes designed to demonstrate his intense personal commitment to the nominee and to traditional conservative values. Consider McGuigan's conversation with Paul Weyrich, father of co-author Weyrich, president of the Free Congress Education and Research Foundation, and Christian conservative activist:

"When he came to my office around that same time, Paul expressed concern for my well-being. Rather than the stern look that conveys urgency or intensity, I saw in his eyes the concern that occasionally moves him to slow his amazingly frenetic pace, to offer counsel to a friend.

"He got right to the point.

"'Pat, you are as uptight now, only a couple of weeks after this started, as you were at the end of the Manion fight [Daniel Manion, a conservative law professor whose nomination to the federal bench was vigorously contested]. You've got to step back, ease up, keep things in perspective.'

"'You're probably right. It's just this simple: They [the liberal opponents of Bork] are doing so much, so fast, so thoroughly, and so effectively. Do you think we can win?' I asked.

"'We have a chance because it's Bork. But the other side has the Senate, and some of our normal champions aren't exactly pulling out all the stops for this guy. We can win, but we might lose,' he answered."

Rarely do McGuigan's stories or analyses demonstrate more depth than this. As for confirming nominees in the future, McGuigan believes conservatives should prepare to overwhelm liberals with the same deplorable tactics the liberals used to scuttle Bork. This strategy includes amassing war chests, conducting intricate media campaigns, and threatening congressmen. It also includes prayer: "Those committed to the rule of law in our beloved land—and who also believe God is in control—need to remember the spiritual and personal dimensions of such battles on this earth."

Despite the urgency that accompanies the conversations throughout *Ninth Justice*, the authors never explain why we should care as much as they do about the Bork nomination. We are aware of his impressive resume—Nixon's infamous solicitor general, Yale Law School professor, and federal appellate court judge—and are told that he advocates judicial restraint. Yet the authors never explain why getting Bork confirmed was particularly essential. Given the conservative voting record of Justice Anthony Kennedy, the judge who eventually replaced Justice Powell, it is unclear why the Bork debacle is significant to conservatives as anything other than a transient political defeat.

The most insightful part of the book is the media essay by Bork's son, R.H. Bork Jr., a former writer for *Forbes* and *U.S. News & World Report*. Bork details how many Washington reporters oriented their coverage around who was criticizing Bork rather than assessing the validity of those criticisms. Bork *fils* attributes this negative coverage to a spreading hostile environment created by liberal interest groups opposed to Bork's nomination, which meant that the sources quoted in many stories—not just the special-interest groups but also the congressional officials whom they advised—attacked the nominee.

Judge Bork was not merely the victim of superior political organizing by liberal groups, but also of the media's

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relative ignorance of the law. Journalists who reported wild charges against Bork often didn't understand the legal context in which the claims were made, or justified reporting them on the basis of "objectivity"—that is, the substance of the remarks was secondary to who made them. Bork Jr.'s most telling example is an extended exchange between Senator Ted Kennedy and Judge Bork during the confirmation. Kennedy leveled accusations without responding to Bork's replies, then concluded his "questioning" with a devastating sound bite that was featured prominently on the television news. Charlie Peters believes that a year of law school would benefit most journalists; the Bork affair shows this goes double for those covering confirmation fights.

—Rodger Citron

The Shattered Bloc. Elie Abel. *Houghton Mifflin, $20.95.* Writing a book about Eastern Europe is like taking a photograph of a speeding train. It's not Elie Abel's fault that his account was repeatedly overtaken by events. Abel, who covered the region for *The New York Times* in the 1950s and for NBC News in the 1960s before becoming a journalism school professor and dean, revisited his old stomping grounds for three months in the summer of 1988. That was a century ago, Eastern European time. (They don't even call it Eastern Europe anymore; it's "Middle Europe" now.) Abel writes that he kept up during 1989 by reading the clips. Unfortunately, it shows. While he manages to provide a cogent and often revealing summary of developments in the area, he misses the drama and richness of one of the great upheavals of the 20th century. The Prague I saw on a brief visit last December is nowhere to be found in Abel's pages. Where's the exhilaration?

But of course romantic revolutions—even if they are peaceful—have a way of running up against prosaic problems. The best contribution this book makes is to lay out the economic realities that lie ahead for these countries. They are daunting. In Hungary, for instance, some 40 percent of state-owned companies lose money. There is no mechanism in Hungary to evaluate credit-worthiness. (On the other hand, one might have been created by the time you read this.) A recent poll of Hungarian students showed that only 37 percent were optimistic about the country's future, compared to 70 percent in 1983, when the push for reform was beginning. That's called a revolution, all right—a revolution of rising expectations. Hungarians are now hoping for many things that until recently they never even thought of—things that they now know will take many years and lots of sacrifices to attain. The new government can't help invest in the future; its hands are tied by the International Monetary Fund. And West Germany and Japan, which already lost billions in bad loans to Hungary in the 1970s, aren't expected to come back. "In the minds of most citizens, the very word 'reform' has come to stand for harder times ahead," writes Abel.

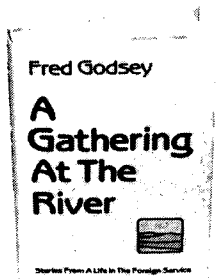
The encouraging news, which Abel mostly misses, is that in many of these countries the people have already shown they are willing to pay what he calls the "punishing price." In Poland, the medicine is stiff indeed, and last year practically every visiting expert came home to say privately that Tadeusz Mazowikcki wouldn't last long. The experts were wrong. Abel does a good job of explaining how the *nomenklatura* (entrenched bureaucracy) and ingrained resistance to profit-making make the prospects of reform bleaker. But I think Abel underestimates the natural human inclination for entrepreneurial capitalism. In the months since he wrote the book, conservative forces have shown great strength at the polls. Those votes are not just rejections of communism; they are endorsements of some kind of capitalist system.

But what kind? Here Abel helps explode a particularly chauvinistic American myth. "More than a few [of those he interviewed] were troubled by what they viewed as its [capitalism's] essential heartlessness; they cited our boom-and-bust cycles, recurrent unemployment, the stubborn survival of poverty in the midst of plenty, and the astronomical cost of medical care. When I asked them to name countries that resolved these problems, Finland, Sweden, and Austria led the list—all three parliamentary democracies with mixed economies and generous social services." This confirms what I found on my trip—that the United States is not the model we sometimes assume it to be.

Abel finds some gold in little nooks and crannies. It was news to me, for instance, that before East Germany's Erich Honecker fell, he undertook a last-ditch effort to reestablish some form of traditional German nationalism. He tried to rehabilitate Bismarck, Frederick the Great, and Martin Luther. It didn't work, of course, but the details of the death throes of communism have been overlooked in many of the postmortems.

If this isn't the one book to read about the events of 1989, which of the dozens of forthcoming journalistic accounts will be? It will have to combine the deep historical understanding of a William Pfaff with the on-the-ground analysis of a Timothy Garton Ash and the telling eye of a P.J. O'Rourke. Let's hope someone can pull it off.

—Jonathan Alter



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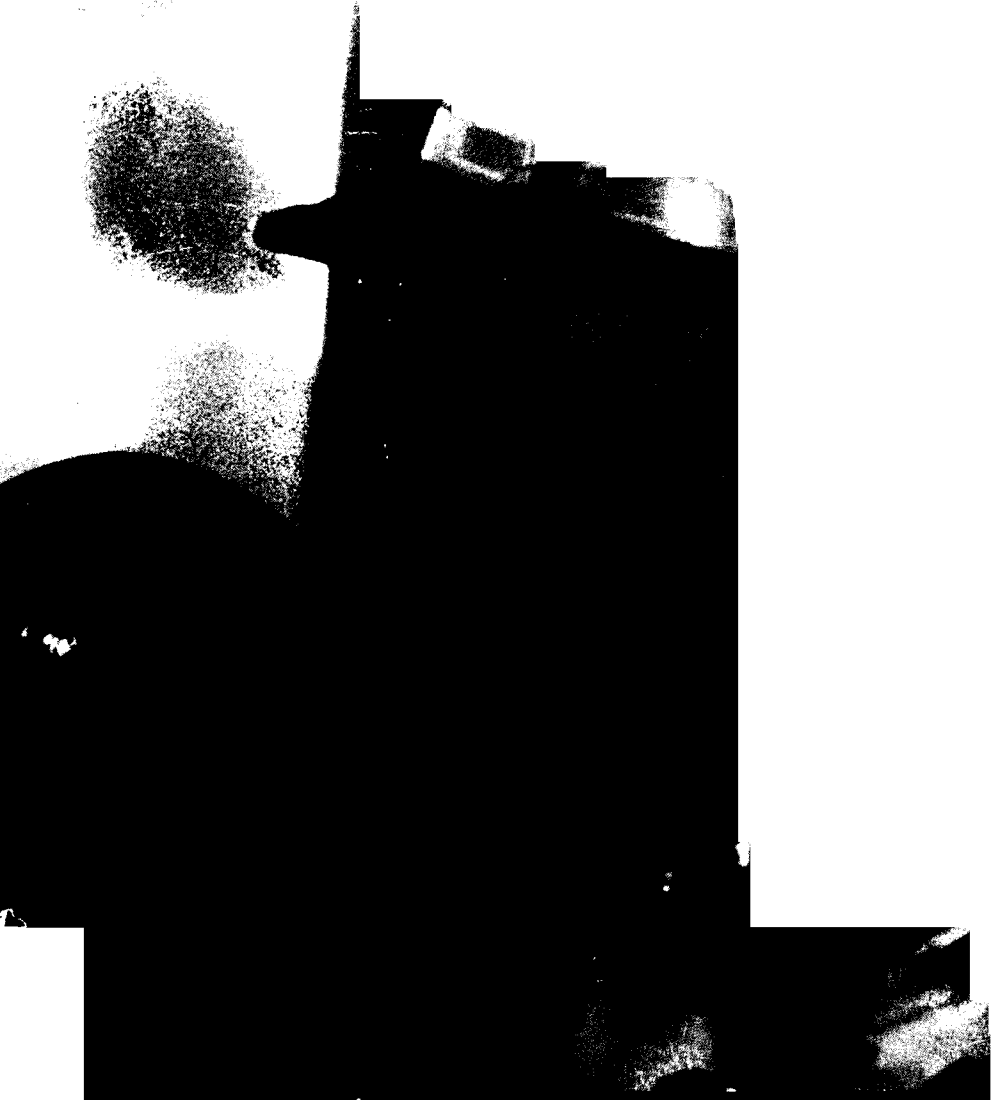

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